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Modern Sermons by World Scholars

VOLUME X

THWING TO ZWEMER

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MODERN SERMONS
BY
WORLD SCHOLARS

EDITED BY
ROBERT SCOTT AND WILLIAM C. STILES
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IN TEN VOLUMES
VOLUME X—THWING TO ZWEMER
GENERAL INDEX

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THWING

THE TWO REVELATIONS

CHARLES FRANKLIN THWING

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THE TWO REVELATIONS

PRES. CHARLES F. THWING, D.D., LL.D.

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds."—Hebrews 1 : 1, 2.

IT is to be presumed that a person will express himself. Expression characterizes personality. If God is a person, the universe may be called an expression of God. The universe is, therefore, an intimation of certain truths about God. If a work suggests the character of the worker, it is not too much to call the universe a revelation of God. If space is not a revelation of Him—and it may be—everything in space is. " The heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork." The natural suggests the supernatural. Nature suggests God. Nature is pantheistic. If not all of God is in nature, God is in all nature. We may call God's being natural, therefore, for He is in nature; we also do call Him supernatural, for He is above nature.

The immanence of God is a form of religious and scientific truth which I wish might be universally accepted. We are inclined to

think that the world is a watch made by God and upon making which He retired from all relation to it. I wish we might think of the universe rather as a flower and of God as the indwelling life of that flower. Science is giving to us understanding of matter as a force, and both science and philosophy unite in allowing us to believe that force is the expression of the being or of the energy of God Himself. Science, philosophy, religion as well as poetry allow us to believe that heaven lies about us not only in infancy, but in every age. Therefore the universe and all that is in the universe may be called the revelation of God.

But tho " the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament showeth his handiwork," men have not read the declaration, or if they have read it, have failed to apply it. Worship through nature is usually the worship of nature; the worship of nature is idolatry. The pagan has seen the sun shining for numberless years, but it is a part of his paganism that he does not regard the sun as suggestive of the divine character. No people has of itself reached a conception of the divine Being which can be called at all worthy. No people has ever been able to read out of nature a worthy revelation of God unless first they read a revelation of God into nature.

When we use the phrase, " the revelation of God," we usually mean either a certain book

or a certain man. This book is called by the name of Bible, or "the book of books." This book is so unique that it is called not only *a* but *the* revelation. The man referred to is known as the Christ. The Christ so represents God that He Himself is called the revelation of God.

The revelation of God in a book and the revelation of God in a person are so related that it is at once easy and hard to consider them together. For the book of revelation has for its principal character the Christ of revelation. Tho more than one-half of the book was written before the Christ came and tho the remainder was written after He went away, yet the earlier part contains a prophecy of His coming and the latter part is concerned with either memorabilia of Him or with inferences and applications of the truth He taught. Tho a large part of the Old Testament could easily have been written without reference to the Christ, hardly a small part of the New Testament would remain if the Christ should be eliminated. We get our chief knowledge of the Christ from the New Testament. Yet if the New Testament were not, tradition might still have given us conceptions of His character and work. Church fathers might have told us the facts and the judgments respecting Him even if the judgments were ill-proportioned and the facts few. Thus the revelation of the book and the reve-

lation of the person are in certain ways independent, yet in others interdependent. It is possibly significant that usually one who denies the Bible as the revelation of God also fails to accept the Christ as the revelation, and one who fails to accept the Christ usually is found rejecting the Bible.

Many are the truths lying beyond human power to understand adequately. They are yet truths which man has seen as if in a shadow. Two of these truths are of special consequence, and upon each of them this double revelation has shed light strong and clear. They are the character of God, and the possibility of the infinite development of man.

The Bible is a book by God. It is also a book concerning God. It is hard to say from a hasty and narrow induction of facts whether God is benevolent or malevolent. As the ordinary man sees nature, he has much reason to believe that the heart of the Eternal is not wonderfully kind. Nature is merciless. She has no pity for mistakes. If you fall into the fire she burns you. If you go into too deep water she drowns you. If you step over the cliff she bruises or mutilates you. Her winds and her freshets are gigantic fiends. But the wiser man, even if not devout, is optimistic. He sees that the good is ever made the purpose of contrivance, evil never. The teeth were not made to ache nor the bones to be broken.

This book describes the character of the divine One as a character of truth, righteousness and love. He has the power of knowing perfectly. He obeys the law of the right perfectly. He is so possest of that comprehensive virtue of love that He is Himself called love. Further, the revelation of the Bible as to the character of God seems to be the literal statement of what the person of Christ exprest. The Christ is called the truth; He is called the light. He does no wrong. No guile is found in Him. God so loved the world that He gave the Christ to the world. The God who loved sent the Christ who went about doing good. Thus the book of revelation sheds light upon the character of God, and the God of the book of revelation is the God who is revealed as the Christ.

The revelation of the book and the revelation of the person are also one in respect to intimating the immense possibilities lying in humanity. The book declares that man is made in the image of God. Christ is called the "Son of God." The spirit of man is called the candle of the Lord. The Christ is said to be life, and this life becomes the light of man. Man is called to work with the divine Being in the achievement of divine purposes and plans. The Christ came to do the will of Him that sent Him. The glories of the Apocalypse spring from the assumption of the glory of manhood. The vision of God be-

longs to the human heart in its purity. The benedictions of God are pronounced upon humanity in its endeavors for goodness in various forms of humility, peacefulness and loyalty to principle. The standard of measurement in the new Jerusalem is the measure of a man. The Christ embodies knowledge and power over nature, strength of character, and the fulfilment of all righteousness. Through commandment and benediction, through the upholding of the ideal and the threatening of penalty, through intimations of divine pleasure and through suggestions of anger, by the glorious promises of Isaiah and the *miserere* of Jeremiah the book is revealing to man the height of the destiny to which he is called. No physical condition of the world is too rich for His dwelling. All sin is the breaking of the fundamental law of His nature and all trifling is unworthy of His destiny. If He is of the earth earthy, He is also of God divine. It is a similar destiny which is embodied in the Christ. No man spoke like Him. He interpreted laws of a nature lying beyond ordinary insight, and He subjected laws visible to the ordinary eye to the laws of nature which He alone saw and could alone use. His wisdom was so wise that it seemed to be omniscience. His power was so powerful that it seemed to be omnipotence. His character was so perfect that all humanity's yearnings seemed to be satisfied in Himself.

He is the fulfilment of the prophecy of man's perfection. He is the Son of man indeed. "Behold the man!"

But this identity of the two revelations is also made evident in the truth of immortality. In human existence is the experience which we call dying. After death what?—is the question. The Old Testament seems to be written on the assumption that man is deathless. The New Testament rests upon the same assumption in larger form and stronger. The eulogy of love in the thirteenth chapter of First Corinthians teaches the eternal relations of an eternal being. The classical passage of the fifteenth chapter of First Corinthians attempts through poetry to tell somewhat of the future life. The Apocalypse endeavors to reveal through metaphor, the majesty and purity of the life eternal. The resurrection of Jesus is a proof that death does not touch the integrity of man's spirit. The one who releases deathless men is Himself deathless. Because He lives we shall live also. The Bible offers little argument to prove that man is immortal. It assumes the fact. The Christ had not much to say about the life immortal: He rises from the dead.

Thus the book and the person, the Bible and the Christ are alike in revealing the truths of the character of God, of the infinity of man and of the immortal life.

There are other truths many and important

which are found in the Bible and which the Christ represents, but these three are the more significant.

Yet I think we often try to find in the Bible and in the Christ what are not to be found in either and belong to neither. We try to find in both certain truths of science or of history which do not belong to either. The Bible is scientific, without being a book of science. Tho Genesis does correspond in the order of its creative days with the periods declared by modern geology, yet the Bible was not given to teach geology. Tho the records of the Bible of Egyptian, Assyrian and Babylonian conquests correspond with the records written on newly discovered slab or brick or cylinder, yet the Bible was not given to teach history. Tho the Christ found His text in seeds and trees and birds He did not come to teach biology. The Bible, tho scientific, is not a record of science. The Bible, tho historic, is not a book of history. The Bible is a revelation of truths respecting the character of God and the duty and the destiny of man. Yet if the statements of the Bible as to science were absolutely known to be false, it would not at all injure for me the book as a revelation of the divine character or of human destiny. It would not at all lessen to me the value of the revelation which I find in the Christ as the God-man. For the Christ came to man as a teacher sent from God, inspiring highest

ideals, revealing the God, and not teaching men of rocks and lichens and mustard seeds. The Bible is the book of ethics, the book of character, the book for the soul, not a Gray's "Manual" or a Darwin's "Origin of Species." The Christ came to give life and life more abundant. He came as the way and the truth. He came to be a Savior. He came not as the teacher whose primary purpose was to discipline the intellect or enlighten simply in human relations. His commandment to love your neighbor as yourself was secondary, His commandment to love God was primary.

We should claim for the Bible all that we need to claim. We should claim for the Bible all that it allows us to claim. It is bad judgment that demands that we claim more than we need. It is false logic which demands that we claim more than we can defend. We do not need the Bible as a text-book in history or science. These are matters in which man is sufficient unto himself. Important, they are not the most important. We do need the Bible as a text-book in theology and ethics—the science of God, the science of humanity. This need the Bible fills. The defenders of the faith fail in demanding too much of the divine book. Opponents foreseeing that certain claims are weak infer that all claims are weak. Let the Bible be accepted as a book from God, of God, about God. That is the

most important; that we can defend; with that let us be content.

That the Bible is a revelation of God, that Christ is a revelation of God, is a double proposition which the formal treatise may be set to prove. I wish, however, to allude to what is to me the strongest argument in its behalf. It is what I shall call the unaccountableness of the Bible and of the Christ. The Bible is. The Christ is. Whence is each? Could the Hebrew or the Gentile of the first century have given us either? Environment helps to determine the character of humanity, as of a literature. Humanity could not create such a book or create such a man. It is only a Christ which could make a Christ. It is only inspiration which could make the Bible. All laws of evidence can not account for either the book or the man. They are therefore from above. All beliefs go along the line of the least resistance. The line of least resistance is to believe that the Bible is God's book for man, and Christ, the Son of man, the Son of God. But I may say that the evidence for this proposition is not at all weakened in these days by the vast enlargement of the fields of knowledge or by a more accurate understanding of these fields. Physical science has, in one sense, nothing to do with the Bible nor the Bible with physical science. The two subjects lie in two different planes and can no more touch than a railway train on its way to

the moon and a Lake Shore train on its way to Chicago. Yet both have an origin in the one Creator. As Cardinal Baronius said, "the intention of the holy Scripture is to teach us how to go to heaven, not how the heavens go." Higher criticism, too, be it said, has not touched the truth of the Bible, except as the geologist touches the rocks. It is not concerned with the intrinsic and essential truth of the Bible, it is simply an endeavor to determine certain facts about the Bible as to when or where or by whom certain parts of it were written. Whatever answer is made, whether Moses did or did not write the Pentateuch, whether there was one Isaiah or were two Isaiahs, whether Job is an historic character or the book is a drama no more effects the primary truths of Christianity or of the Bible than the proof that Euclid did not write a geometry would affect the principles of mathematics. It is not a strong confidence in the Bible as God's book but a weak and faltering one which confesses that the Bible is shattered or Christianity weakened by such concession. A strong faith has no fear; a weak faith has all fear.

The Protestant Church we often say is founded on the Bible. The remark is true and false. It is true, for it was a restoration of the fundamental truth of the Bible that gave to the world the Protestant Church. The remark is false, for the Church is founded on

Jesus Christ Himself, "the chief cornerstone." There is some danger tho slight, therefore, of Bibliolatry in the Protestant Church. The Bible is not God tho it is a revelation from God and about God. It is a book to be received not in place of God but as a guide to God. If it is the "magna charta" of Christianity, it is not Christianity. The God in the world uses the Bible as a special and peculiar manifestation of Himself. Men must have the Bible. "Men," says Matthew Arnold, "will return to the Bible because they can not do without it." They can not do without it because happiness is our being's aim, and happiness belongs to righteousness and righteousness is revealed in the Bible. For this simple reason men will return to the Bible, just as a man tried to give up food thinking it was a vain thing and he could do without it, but he returned to food; or as a man who tried to give up sleep thinking it was a vain thing and he could do without it, but he returned to sleep. To reject the Bible is to reject the best knowledge of God; to receive the Bible into both mind and heart is to accept the God who gave the book of life and also Him whose life is the light of men.

TUCKER

THE CONCERN OF JESUS FOR THE FAITH

WILLIAM JEWETT TUCKER

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THE CONCERN OF JESUS FOR THE FAITH

WILLIAM JEWETT TUCKER, D.D.

"When the Son of man cometh shall he find the faith on the earth?"—Luke 18 : 8.

JESUS did not ask whether men would continue or cease to believe. He understood, as we cannot understand, the imperishable instinct of faith. He knew that man would never rest in any conclusion of unbelief before the unsolved mystery of His being.

The question that Jesus put was so definite and personal as to be almost pathetic. "When the Son of man cometh shall he find *the* faith on the earth?" He who was giving to the world an idea, a faith the most precious which had ever entered the mind of man, a faith which was to be consecrated by His passion and transfigured by His resurrection, and then to go out into all the earth, recovering so many individual lives and changing so often the face of society asks if, in the event of His coming again, He shall find the idea alive, the faith burning at the heart of humanity. This question, falling from the lips of Christ is, I say, almost pathetic. We can see in it one of the sorrows of Jesus.

But the chief significance of it to all generations of Christian believers, and now in turn to us, lies in the fact that it points with unerring constancy to the danger which is inherent in Christianity, namely, the danger of losing faith in itself, in its distinctive principles and method, and in the certainty of their success. This is "the faith" which called for the anxious questioning of Jesus. The world will keep this faith to the end if it maintains a Christianity which it can trust. Any generation may lapse from this faith, and lose its place in the succession by failing to maintain a Christianity which it can trust. I propose therefore the question whether we as a generation are keeping or losing *the* faith, faith, that is, in Christianity.

It will not be easy to answer this question according to its seriousness except as we take the right approach to it. When our Lord reopened the kingdom of God on earth He laid down two, and only two conditions of entrance—character and faith. The terms of admission were reduced to the simple formula, repent and believe. The contribution of character was to be in excess of that which was then current among religious people. "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no wise enter into the kingdom of heaven." Not more righteousness, but righteousness of another spirit and of wider action

is demanded; a righteousness adapted to the new faith and commensurate with it. The contrast came out in perfect clearness, when the young ruler offered to Christ the old obedience, and could not follow Him. The transfer from the old type to the new was fully made in the conversion of Saul of Tarsus. That excess of righteousness of which Jesus had spoken was found in the difference between the righteousness of Paul the Christian and that of Saul the Pharisee. The character which was to support the new faith was to have all those outgoing qualities which would make a Christian believer worthy of being a follower of Christ.

And the chief characteristic of the new faith called for was belief in the ability of Christ to accomplish the ends for which this advance in character was demanded. Faith took this practical form throughout the ministry of Jesus. He never dealt in abstractions. He never confused the issue of faith. "Believest thou that I am able to do this?" That was all that was necessary to insure a miracle of healing. The training of the Twelve both in doctrine and in action was to the same end. Did He wish to make the disciples believe in the new conception of God, He taught them to believe in His capacity to reveal God and to represent Him. "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." Did He wish to make them believe in the new estimate of humanity, He

taught them to believe in the possibilities of men, of all men, in Him "the Son of man." Did He wish to make them believe in the new way of power over men, the way of sacrifice—"And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me. This he said signifying what death he should die." Did He wish to make them believe in the new assurance of immortality—"I am the resurrection and the life." "Because I live ye shall live also." Everywhere in the teachings of Christ about Himself as the object of faith, one note is struck: it is the note of power. "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And the Christianity which He left to be believed in and trusted, was the embodiment of His glorious personality, quick with the spirit of His teachings and ministry, wide as the sweep of His sacrifice, strong and sure as His resurrection. Reaching then the question before us through this approach I ask again, are we as a generation of Christian believers keeping or losing the faith, faith in Christianity?

There are three tests through which every generation must pass in making any substantial answer to this question. The absolute loyalty or faith of a generation must be measured by its intellectual attitude to Christianity, by the depth of its moral passion, and by the timeliness of its action.

The intellectual attitude of our generation to Christianity represents in some respects the

generation at its best. For its attitude in this regard has been conspicuous for hospitality and courage. It is profitless, and may easily become unchristian, to dwell upon the intellectual shortcomings or even follies of other times, but it is quite fair to say that one of the greatest hindrances to the progress of Christianity, a sign of unfaith whenever it has appeared, has been the inhospitality of the Church to the Christian idea in its fulness. There has seemed to be an inability, rather perhaps than an unwillingness, to accept the gospel in its universality. The gospel has been obliged to force its way from age to age through some limitation or restriction, now of dogma, now of ecclesiasticism, now of mere tradition. I doubt not that at certain times narrowness of conception has resulted in intensity of action. But the fact remains that the Church has but just reached the position, not yet established in the confessions, but a position from which it seems impossible to recede, namely, that of the acknowledgment of the absolute and equal right of every human being in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

I do not lay great stress on the acceptance of this idea as a mark of our intellectual hospitality, for the idea has simply culminated in our time. What is much more clearly in evidence is the fact of the incoming in our time of the idea that Christianity is applicable not only to the individual but also to the

world, the world of organized institutions and forces. It is one thing to believe in the individual as the subject of redemption even when you multiply him into all men of all races throughout the world, and another thing to believe in the world itself as the subject of redemption. And this is what we are beginning to believe in. The earlier Christianity lost the idea through its misapprehension of prophecy. Medieval Christianity could not accept it because of its direful experience in this world. Modern Christianity recognizes its significance, and entertains it, not as a dream (the idea is not new in this sense), but as a working conception of Christianity. I do not say that the idea has passed as yet out of the intellectual stage, but it is a distinct advance to have reached this stage, for the very idea, as you see, mightily enhances the task laid upon Christianity, of which Christianity is assumed to be capable. And it must also be remembered that it is not possible to entertain an idea seriously without receiving an effect whether we recognize the cause or not. For some cause we are building our substance as never before into institutions; for some cause we are advancing from the evangelistic to educational work in missions; for some cause we are urging consecration to the State as well as to the Church; for some cause we are allowing young men of most serious purpose to pass by the ministry on their way to

the service of man and of God. Unconsciously, it may be, but actually we are at work upon the world, and not simply upon the individual as the only subject of redemption.

Hospitality is not the highest intellectual quality; it is not so high a quality as courage. The test of intellectual courage has been applied in a peculiar manner to the religious faith of our generation. Under the revolution of thought through which we have passed the challenge to Christianity has been different from that which had ever been issued. It was a challenge which could not be answered by controversy. Argument was of no avail. Concessions were futile. All the old weapons of offense and defense were useless. The challenge of the new thought demanded one thing, to be accepted or denied, freedom to investigate. It asked to have the foundations of unbelief uncovered. It asked to have the sources of authority opened. It asked to have its own tests applied to everything which was capable of examination. To the honor of the Church, a sign of its faith in Christianity, it accepted the challenge. It first allowed and then promoted investigation. Nothing was held back. And while the process went on Christian believers came out of their old defenses and abode in the presence of Christ. One thing only they would not expose, because they could not, the source of their loyalty to

Him. That was not a matter of investigation. It was worth much to the Church to pass this test of intellectual courage: it was worth much to get the result of it. The result is stability. We have witnessed the "removing of things that are shaken as of things that are made." We have "the things that cannot be shaken," the things which "remain."

It does not seem probable that the Church will ever be subjected to any intellectual tests of its faith more severe than those through which it has recently passed. One can hardly conceive of a philosophical theory, with which religion is concerned, more radical or more sweeping than the theory of evolution, or of a method of investigation more thorough and more searching than the method of historical criticism. And on the other hand it does not seem as if any greater idea, grander in its proportions, or more exacting in its details could ask for lodgment in the Christian mind than that of the redemption of the world, the purification of its laws, customs, and literature, and the establishment of its governments and industries in righteousness and peace. Other intellectual qualities quite different from courage and hospitality may be called for in the future, but I doubt if the exhibition of these qualities will be surpassed. The courage which allows investigation without let or hindrance is calmer, more resolute, more confident than the courage which bristles with

argument or declares itself in anathemas. And the hospitality which welcomes new tasks weighty and exacting, evinces a trust in Christianity as the great unspent force in the moral life of the world.

The intellectual attitude of a generation to Christianity is but a single and by no means the most essential test of its faith. We go deeper in our inquiry when we ask about the force of its moral passion. I use the term moral passion rather than moral power because moral power is not available for the full use of Christianity until it has become passion. This, as we saw, was the difficulty with the righteousness which Christ found among men. It could not cross the line. It was a safe, careful, calculating righteousness. A righteous man after this type might have value among his own kind, in his own set. "The value of a truly great man," it has been said, "consists in his increasing the value of all mankind." Such is the value of a truly good man. He increases the moral valuation of other men. I do not underestimate the worth of the ordinary man. I do not despise his attainments in goodness or belittle his achievements. But he is not saving the world. It is not through him that the kingdom of heaven is brought in. His goodness is no match for the badness around him, organized or unorganized. He does not love goodness as other men love evil. His power is not power because it

is not passion. I do not say that moral passion must take any one form. Cardinal Manning once spoke of the Salvation Army as "the only considerable body of Christians who had a passion for sinners as such." That was high praise. But goodness is not shut up to any one object of devotion. There is a passion for truth as well as for men; a passion for justice as well as for mercy; a passion for resistance to evil as well as for the spread of righteousness. One thing only is required for the uses of Christianity, that a man shall come out of the easy commonplace, and satisfy in some way the plain terms of the Christian life, loyalty, service, consecration, sacrifice. Christ is very explicit on this point. The greatest unfaith toward Christianity is the unfaith of selfishness. "He that saveth his life shall lose it: but he that loseth his life for my sake and the gospel's shall save it."

It is very difficult to estimate the moral attitude of a generation toward Christianity as compared with its intellectual attitude. For the reckoning here must be in the terms of service and sacrifice which are personal terms. What are men doing at cost or risk for the world? What are they giving up for the common good? Is the spirit of sacrifice prevalent? Do the high claims of Christianity find a generous response? The reckoning is not easy in the absence of great exciting causes. The generations which heard the first

cry of modern liberty, the generation which heard the first appeal of heathen lands, the generation which heard the groans of the slave, had a mighty advantage. After great conflicts the world grows still. We miss the outward call. Duty becomes less attractive as it becomes less imperative. Perhaps it was in anticipation of these long periods of the commonplace that Jesus indicates the possible lapses of faith in Christianity. It is not difficult to believe that Christianity can do great things, convert great sinners, change bad customs, conquer evil when it is very evil. It is not difficult to take part in the crusades and campaigns of Christianity. The strain to faith falls upon that steady, patient, enduring work which calls equally for that excess of righteousness, without which there is no progress. We have felt the strain upon our faith at this point. I am not prepared to say that we have altogether kept the faith. I think that we are all conscious of a certain loss of available moral power. The fact that the social well-being, which must rest on the moralities, is on the increase is not decisive. I am more concerned to know where the really strenuous life of the time is to be found, and toward what ends it is set. Does Christianity in its specific work, and for its direct ends absorb a proper amount of the energy, and enthusiasm, and sacrifice, of our generation? I make due account of the widening of Chris-

tian influences and of Christian activities, but I cannot satisfy myself in regard to the result. For a time it seemed as if the material development of the age would prove a stimulus to moral effort and not a diversion from it. Gradually it has proved more and more absorbing. The present danger from materialism does not seem to me to lie in financial prosperity even with its attendant evils of social inequality, luxury, and gilded vice, but rather in the disproportionate absorption of the force, the thought, the ambition, the mind, heart, and will of the better life of our generation. Material prosperity has given us a splendid equipment for moral service, but it is putting the men we most want and need more and more out of our reach. We are gaining in all the agencies and means of educational and religious development, but we are not gaining in the number of adequate men for influential and commanding and necessitous positions. We cannot afford to accept the substitution of means for men. It is my firm conviction that the Church at large can find no equivalent for the pulpit. We must maintain the places which stand for the expression of moral passion. We must keep open the channels which lead from the one man to the many. We must see to it that personal power is utilized to the last degree in the interest of truth and righteousness. The next revival of religion will stand, I have no

doubt, for the recovery of personality. Religion will call men back to its service, and will accept nothing in place of themselves. One cannot give money or anything else with the same passion with which he gives himself. All other forms of consecration are secondary —valuable but secondary. No generation therefore can show its full faith in Christianity which does not offer its best gifts. Our generation has not been as generous of men as it has been of means, for the direct and indirect uses of Christianity. Lacking in this regard I do not dare to affirm its full confidence in Christianity as measured by the depth of its moral passion.

The final test of the faith of a generation in Christianity, to which I have referred, is concerned with the timeliness of its action. Does it apply Christianity to its own problems and opportunities, promptly and effectively? This is a much graver test than it may at first appear to be. It is a very serious business for a generation to pass its obligations and burdens on to those which follow or even to leave its opportunities for belated improvement. The path from neglect and delay leads straight to impatience, doubt, and unfaith. The parable which precedes my text rests upon those experiences which grow out of the delays of righteousness. It is these delays which have always wakened the taunt of unbelief: "Where is now thy God?" It is these same

delays which have wakened the cry of faith: "How long, O Lord, how long?"

> "Oh, why these years of waiting here,
> These ages of delay?"

Whatever may have been the significance of this cry of faith in past times—and there have been times when it must have been terribly significant—we must regard it more and more as the utterance of an uneducated faith. The faith which discerns more clearly the counsel of the Most High learns that the interferences of God in the affairs of this world are not made through wrath but through mercy. His mightiest interference was at Calvary. The vengeance for which the saints call in their faith or unfaith comes, but not often as they expect. The cry of the martyrs is heard and answered, but the answer is not in the gift of destroyers of men and of nations, but in the gift of reformers and saviors. God seldom intrusts His work of interference to other souls than to those finely tempered to this work. They are the Luthers, the Wesleys, the Lincolns. They know how to execute the vengeance of God in the salvation of nations and of races. When once we understand God's method of interference in the affairs of men then we see how great is the stress which must be laid upon the timeliness of the action of each Christian generation. Accumulations of wrong are not to be wiped off by one stroke of

vengeance, but accumulations of wrong are to be prevented by the prompt initiative of faith. That the Church of the twentieth century finds itself so largely in arrears in the work of righteousness argues unfaith, at many critical times, in the power of Christianity.

In subjecting our generation to this test of the timeliness of action, we ought not to overlook the variety or the urgency of the tasks which have fallen to its lot. I recall the remark of Dr. Roswell D. Hitchcock that the problem before Christianity is always a threefold problem—"to gain, to keep, to recover." This threefold problem forced itself upon us with peculiar urgency. The Christian nations were to be held at their best; ancient peoples and civilizations were to be won; and the backward and disheartened races were to be comforted and quickened. Some of the special tasks, like missions, were the sacred bequest of preceding generations. We could not abandon the responsibilities of which we had been put in trust. But other problems and responsibilities were our own. How have we treated these? Have we shown insight, invention, sympathy, or have we been remiss at any one or all of these points?

One of the most striking exhibitions of timely action on the part of this or any generation has been seen in the treatment of the younger life of the Church. The Christian Endeavor movement which has found its way

round the world, is an example at once of Christian insight, invention, and sympathy. It represents that rare combination of responsibility and freedom which insures the safe and happy guidance of childhood into the opening years of greater freedom and responsibility. And the spirit which has characterized this movement has marked the whole educational work of the generation. It must be acknowledged with profound gratitude that the young men of the great Christian peoples are accessible to Christian ideals and Christian incentives. The stamp of unbelief is not on them. On the other hand, it is doubtful if the Church of any generation has allowed so large a section of the various Christianized communities to fall out of its grasp and away from its influences as the Church of this generation has allowed. The estrangement if not alienation of the labor population of the Christian nations is chargeable in no slight degree to the unfaith of the Church. Its action in this regard has shown no marks of timeliness, but has been slow, unsympathetic, and unbelieving. And the result of it is the transmission to another generation of the work of recovery to be wrought out only in patience, in sympathy, and in enduring faith. Of course the chief problem and opportunity of our time has grown out of the vast changes of population, changes seen in the abandonment of old and the occupation

of new localities, and especially in the concentration into cities. The occupation of new territory, whether in the states of this country or in the colonies of England, has been followed almost without exception by timely Christian effort. I do not know how the Church could have been more alert, or more successful in the care of its children, or in its treatment of the stranger within the land. The Christianity of our generation has not mastered the city. We have invaded it with the Church, and school, and mission, and charity, but the city itself, at least of this country, is in no sense a Christian or Christianized institution. Activity of every sort can be put to the credit of our generation. The one word, which can express a patient, tireless, unrelenting faith cannot yet be uttered—mastery.

The answer then to the question before us, which I have tried to relate not so much to statistics or facts about which we might differ in the estimate, as to principles and qualities about which we can agree, is in no sense disheartening, but it does show us the way, I trust, to a deeper and more resolute faith. The intellectual attitude of our generation toward Christianity expressed in hospitality and courage can pass on into the love of God with all the mind. The moral power of which so much has gone over into secondary and transient uses, can be recovered to ends which

are first and everlasting. And the activities which tho many are insufficient, can be made to center in the strength of a masterful faith.

Whatever may be our interest in policies and doctrines, our concern is for the common Christianity. The question of our Lord reaches the whole Christian fellowship. It is a challenge to the heart of this generation of Christian believers. Happy for us if it can force the answer which a like challenge brought out of the heart of the great disciple of the human Christ, "Lord, thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." If our loyalty be assured, and who can doubt it, we do not lose our place in the succession of the faith.

But happier far for us, and for those who may come after us, if it shall prove that our generation may yet be able to rise to the utterance of that greater disciple of the spiritual Christ, not seen in the flesh, "That I may know him and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of his sufferings." No loyalty to Christ is complete that does not carry with it the faith that is determined to "know him." Men speak of the return of Christianity to the type of some past glory. They call again for the Puritan, for Augustine, for the primitive Christian. It is a vain cry. Christianity never returns upon itself. The ages which have brought us hither are not repetitious of one another. The law of

spiritual progress is closely akin to the law of material progress. Material progress assumes the inexhaustible power of nature. The world discovers some new secret of its power, and moves on. Spiritual progress assumes the inexhaustible power of Christianity. The Church discovers some new secret of its power, and moves on. The spirit of discovery is the spirit of faith. Nothing new is possible to any age which does not believe in the unrevealed powers of nature or of Christianity, as it believes in those which have been revealed. The practical future of Christianity depends upon this kind of faith. It is first the faith of the closet and of the study. I am not content that our generation should be known alone for its works of applied Christianity. May God grant unto us that we be known and remembered for our faith as well as for our works. May He give unto us yet the open vision. May He help us in the maintenance of our faith, that we be true to its lofty tradition, that they who work must also watch, "watch for more light to break forth from God's holy word."

VAN DYKE

THE ANGEL OF GOD'S FACE

HENRY VAN DYKE

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THE ANGEL OF GOD'S FACE[1]

PROF. HENRY VAN DYKE

"In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them."—Isa. 63 : 9.

THERE is a difference between our theories about God and our thoughts of God. If you and I were perfect in knowledge and wisdom, if there were no separation between our intellectual and practical life, if reason and love were in complete harmony, if we really knew all that we feel and really felt all that we know, then, of course, there would not be any possibility of such a difference. Our theories about God, which are our theology, and our thought of God, which are our religion, would be in clear and sweet and perfect unity. And surely this would be a blesséd and happy thing for us; this would be true spiritual peace and joy; this would be the deepest inward rest and satisfaction.

Let me try to make this plain. You have a theory of friendship. You reason about it as something of which human nature is capable. You form a conception of its different elements, of its true conditions, of its modes of

[1] Printed by permission of the author from his book, "The Open Door." Westminster Press.

action, of its powers and possibilities. And that theory of friendship is a good thing for you to have. It is precious. It elevates and cheers your mind. But presently, as you go on your way through the world, you find a friend; one who comes close to you in that mysterious contact of personalities which is the most wonderful thing in the world; one who knows you, cares for you, loves you, gives you the sacred gifts of fellowship and help. Trouble befalls you. Your friend stands by you, strengthens you, counsels you, helps you to fight your way out of that which is conquerable and to endure patiently that which is inevitable. Sorrow enters your house. Your friend is there, sharing your grief, bearing it with you and for you, coming closer to you than ever before, and quieting your wounded heart with sympathy,

"Like the song of a mother who soothes into rest
The tired child lying at peace on her breast."

And now your theories of friendship are translated into your thoughts of your friend. They are clarified, corrected it may be, purified and intensified if your experience is a deep and true one; at all events, they are transformed into something very different from what they were before. Once you reasoned about them; now you feel them. Once they belonged to your philosophy; now they

belong to your life. Once you believed in friendship; now you trust your friend.

It seems to me that it is just this strange and beautiful transformation of abstract theory into living thought that God means to work out in our relations with Him by the experience of life. He reveals certain truths to us about Himself. Or, if you like to put it in another way, reason leads us to certain conclusions in regard to Him. He is infinite, eternal, and unchangeable in His being, wisdom, power, righteousness, holiness, justice, goodness, and truth. We believe that. Our minds assent to such a noble statement. Yes, but God wants us to go beyond that. He wants us to know Him; for only personal knowledge, only knowledge that is woven into the very fabric of our souls, abides with us for ever.

Our theories about God are our theology. It is well to value them, to try our best to keep them pure and high. But the deeper question is, What is our religion? What are our real thoughts of God? In that deep and secret place of our inmost consciousness, where all our desires and feelings and hopes and aspirations are born, what is God to us? This is the great question, the searching question. And on the answer to it our peace, our happiness, our usefulness depend.

We say that God is perfect in wisdom. But do we feel that He is wise for us? Do we trust His wisdom to guide and direct us? Do we

think of Him as the one who always knows what is best for us?

We say that God is perfect in righteousness. But do we know Him as "the Lord, our righteousness?" Do we trust assuredly in Him to cleanse us from the guilt and deliver us from the power of sin? Do we yield ourselves to His will and purpose to purify us by the discipline of life?

We say that God is omnipresent:

"His dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things."

It is a grand doctrine, an inspiring doctrine, this of the divine omnipresence. But do we think of God as present with us personally in all the experiences of life? Such a thought of Him is infinitely more needful, infinitely more precious than any theory of His omnipresence.

Go back to the illustration that we drew from the theory of friendship. You know that a true friendship must have in it a wide and generous sympathy with all the trouble that there is in the world. But when trouble comes to you, you want to be sure that your friend knows of it, and feels it, and is ready to help you bear it. A general thought of your friend's goodness is not enough. What

you long for is the saving presence of a personal sympathy.

It is not otherwise in our relation to God. What we want, to speak plainly, is to feel that God knows what happens to us, and is with us while it happens, and loves us steadily and tenderly through it all. The time when we want this most is in the time of affliction, because that is the time when it is hardest to find, and yet without it we must perish in despair. In prosperity, in happiness, we feel that we can get on, after a fashion, without God. But when the clouds gather around us and the storms descend, when our dreams are broken and our dearest treasures take wings and fly away, then we know that to be without God in the world is to be without hope. Soon or late that time comes to every man and woman. Soon or late we cross the dry places where we must be unutterably lonely unless God is with us. Soon or late the path of life dips down into the shadowed valley where we must walk in darkness and stumble among the graves unless the Lord God giveth us light. And so this text of ours is like a lamp which the prophet kindles and puts into our hands that we may use it when we need it.

Not all men may feel that they have any necessity for it at any specified time. There may be some to whom the world seems all bright; life smooth and pleasant; the ways of Providence as plain and easy to understand as

a child's picture book. But some day or other you will stumble over something and fall, and when you rise and look about you the world will be changed: it will look very dark and mysterious; many things will seem to be against you; there will be conflicts and fears; you will stand face to face with that which dismays you and makes your heart shrink within you in terror of great darkness. Probably most men have known something of that experience already. Bright as our lives have been, some shadows have fallen upon them. Even the young, the strong, the fortunate, the light-hearted, have their disappointments, their misgivings, their trials, their afflictions. "If thou hast run with the footmen, and they have wearied thee, then how canst thou contend with horses? And if in the land of peace, wherein thou trustedst, they wearied thee, then how wilt thou do in the swelling of Jordan?" Yes, we all of us need something of the strength and cheer and comfort and guidance which dwell in this word of the prophet. Let us try to see what it means to translate the theory of God's omnipresence into the living thought that God is with us in all the trials and troubles of life. Let us try to learn how it is that the angel of God's presence saves us in the midst of our afflictions:

This truth cannot mean anything to us unless we realize what kind of a presence it is of which the prophet speaks. And surely this

ought not to be hard to discover and understand. He looks backward over the tribulations and distresses of Israel, this man of God, Himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, and as he surveys the long story of trouble and suffering he sees God's presence shining through it all, like the face of a friend. In the joy of this vision the prophet speaks for God. "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his face"—the angel who stands before His face continually, or, it may be, the angel who represents and reveals Him as the face reveals the spirit—"the angel of his face saved them."

Now surely this means, first of all, a gracious, friendly, loving, sympathizing presence. God is with us in our troubles, not merely because He has to be there, since He is everywhere; He is there because He wants to be. Just as truly as you desire to be near your friends, your children, when they suffer, just so truly does God desire and choose to be near us in our afflictions. He would not be away from us even if He could. He is not present as a mere spectator, looking at us curiously while we suffer. That cold and distant conception of Him as the great on-looker

> "Who sees with equal eyes as God of all
> A hero perish or a sparrow fall,"

is not the thought of the Bible. He is with us as one who has the deepest interest in it all,

feels all that happens to us, cares infinitely for us through it all. Nor is He present merely as the author of our pains and sorrows who could have spared us from them if He would, but who insists upon inflicting them on us, whatever it may cost us to bear them. It costs Him as much as it costs us. "He doth not afflict willingly nor grieve the children of men." There is a wondrous power in the precise words in which the prophet voices this profound truth. Literally they are translated, "In all their adversity he was no adversary."

How that thought glows with light! The deepest gloom of adversity comes from the idea that God must be against us. How can He be good and yet afflict the world so bitterly? How can He be loving and yet pierce us with the arrows of pain, and torture us with loathsome diseases, and crush our hearts with disappointment, and smite the innocent little children with death? We must face the question, for it is a part of our life. We cannot run away from it. We ought not to cover it up with flowery words. The only answer to it comes along the line of this blesséd text.

Even in the midst of our adversities God is not our adversary. These things are not His works. They are the works of human sin and folly and perversity—a strange power, a hostile power—hostile to Him as to us. Why He has permitted it to enter the world we cannot

understand. Surely He would not have done so if it had not been necessary. And surely there is no necessity with God which is not a means of ultimate and transcendent good,

"At last, far off, at last to all."

But now that evil is here, with all its attendant train of suffering, God is with us, not as our enemy in causing the pain, but as our Father and Friend in sharing it.

There is nothing that we regret with pure hearts that He does not regret far more. There is nothing that makes us honestly sorry that does not give Him an infinitely deeper sorrow. Do we grieve as we think of the anguish of the many generations of the children of men? He grieves far more profoundly. "His soul was grieved," says the prophet, "for the misery of Israel." Does it fill us with pain that death has entered this beautiful world, and walks to and fro among the springing flowers and the singing birds, and touches our fairest and loveliest with his cold hand and lays them low? The pain, the pity, the deep regret of it all is infinitely greater in the divine heart. Death as we know it and shrink from it, is God's enemy just as truly as it is ours. "The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death." It is the other side of death, the side that we do not know, the side that God has made to counterbalance and con-

quer this dark and painful side, the messenger that leads the soul into peace and light and joy, that is God's friend, God's angel. And while we suffer in this world from death as a bereavement, an affliction, while we endure the manifold ills that flesh is heir to, while we are disappointed and troubled and distrest, God is with us as one who bears our griefs and carries our sorrows.

Do you say that it is hard to think of God as thus entering into our afflictions? Yes, it is hard. And yet there were men even before Christ came, as our text proves, who rose to the nobility of that thought of a sympathizing God who suffers with us. And if we believe that God revealed Himself in Christ to draw the world unto Himself, then surely it ought to be possible for us to lay firm hold upon the thought of the divine sympathy in all our afflictions.

What sorrow is equal to His sorrow? Do you think His tears at the grave of Lazarus did not come from the heart? Tho He knew all—resurrection, immortality, heaven—yet Jesus wept at the sadness of death. Do you think His tears over Jerusalem did not come from the heart? Tho He knew all—the victory of His atoning death, the triumph of His faith—yet Jesus lifted up His voice and wept over the sufferings of men. Do you think the drops of blood in the garden did not come from the heart? Tho He knew all—the merit

of His sacrifice, the joy of His reward, the glory of His kingdom—yet the soul of Jesus was exceeding sorrowful even unto death. Ah, my friends, do you not know the meaning of this? When we look on Jesus Christ as the revealer of the heart of God, what affliction of our mortal life is there into which it does not bring God as our fellow-sufferer? "In all our afflictions he is afflicted, and the angel of his face saves us."

God's presence with us in the time of trouble is then a personal, gracious, loving, sympathizing presence. But more than this, it is a covenanted presence, it is promised and promised forever, for all time and in every experience. The text teaches us this. The angel of His face is none other than the angel of the covenant in whom God's pledge to be with His people for ever is redeemed. Turn back to the ancient Scriptures and hear Him give this pledge to Jacob: "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, . . . for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Hear His promise to Joshua: "I will not fail thee nor forsake thee." Hear His promise through Isaiah: "I the Lord will hear thee; I the God of Israel will not forsake thee. When thou passest through the waters I will be with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee. And even to your old age, I am he, and even

to hoar hairs will I carry you; I have made and I will bear, even I will carry and will deliver you." And then hear the pledge of Jesus Christ: "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world."

As long as God lives and our souls live, so long does this pledge stand. It is true, we cannot always feel this presence. But we can always know that it is there, always think of it, so long as thought endures, always rest upon it forever and forever: and the reason why this promise is given is that we may hold fast to this truth.

There may be a moment in the very depth of sorrow and anguish when the presence is hidden from us. But it is not because God is absent. It is because we are stunned, unconscious. It is like passing through a surgical operation. The time comes for the ordeal. The anesthetic is ready. You are about to become unconscious. You stretch out your hand to your friend, "Don't leave me, don't forsake me." The last thing you feel is the clasp of that hand, the last thing you see is the face of that friend. Then a moment of darkness, a blank—and the first thing you feel is the hand; the first thing you see is the face of love again. So the angel of God's face stands by us, bends above us, and we may know that He will be there even when all else fails. Our friends die, our possessions take wings and fly

away, our honors fade, our strength fails, but beside every moldering ruin and every open grave, in the fading light of every sunset, in the gathering gloom of every twilight, amid the mists that shroud the great ocean beyond the verge of mortal life, there is one sweet, mighty voice that says, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee. In all thy afflictions I will be with thee, and the angel of my face shall save thee."

If this is how we are to think of the presence of God in our lives, as a personal, sympathizing, loving presence, pledged to us for all times and all possible occasions, it ought to be easy for us to see how it will save us. The power of such a thought of God always with us, and most of all in our times of weakness and trial and trouble, must be a redeeming, delivering, upbearing power.

It must save us, first of all, from the sense of meanness, littleness, unworthiness which embitters life and makes sorrow doubly hard to bear. The presence of God must bring a sense of dignity, of elevation into our existence. It was a great king who once said, "Where I sleep, there is the palace." The life that has the presence of God in it can be neither trivial nor unworthy.

Our daily existence sometimes seems to us a thing of small account. It appears to be made up of endless petty tasks and a few petty pleasures and many petty trials. It produces

no great results, makes no large mark on the page of history, contributes no striking figure to the panorama of the world. We just go on attending to the details of business in a small office, or keeping house in a quiet street; and the children are a little larger this year than they were last year; and we have a few more gray hairs; and we have managed to meet our obligations fairly well. But we wonder what we were sent into the world for. My friend, you were sent into the world to live your life with God. If He can come into this life of yours you ought to think well of it. It ought to be adorned and ennobled by His presence. All its daily duties, all its small delights—for there is no life so narrow that it has not room for the spirit of joy—should seem to you refined and uplifted by the divine participation in them. Let us get out of the false notion that the only way to be dignified is to be distinguished, the only way to be good is to be heroic, the only way to help the world is to make a sensation, the only way to serve Christ is to do something big. Let us learn that the whole Christian life, whether it is lived on a scale of miles or of inches, is a beautiful and worthy life, and that what God requires of us is not to accomplish anything wonderful, but to do justice and love mercy and walk humbly with our God. God has two thrones—one in the highest heaven, one in the lowliest heart.

The angel of God's face saves us also from

that feeling of reckless indifference, dumb carelessness, which sometimes tempts us to let our lives go blundering and stumbling along on the lower levels. It brings a new conscience into our thoughts, desires, and efforts, awakens a noble dissatisfaction with our half-hearted work, quickens within us a longing to be more fit for the divine companionship.

It is one mark of a good friend that he makes you wish to be at your best while you are with him. The blesséd persons who have this influence are made in the likeness of that heavenly Friend whose presence is at once a stimulus and a help to purity of heart and nobleness of demeanor. A man's reputation is what his fellowmen think of him. A man's character is what God knows of him. When we feel that the angel of His face is with us, a careless life, a superficial life no longer satisfies us. We long to be pure in heart, strong in purpose, clean in deed, because we know that nothing else will satisfy Him.

The angel of God's face saves us from the sense of weakness, ignorance, incompetence, which often overwhelms us in the afflictions of life. We feel not only that we are powerless to protect ourselves against trouble, but that we are not able to get the good out of it that ought to come to us. We cannot interpret our sorrows aright. We cannot see the real meaning of them. We cannot reach our hand through the years to catch "the far-off in-

terest of tears," We say to ourselves in despair, " God only knows what it means." And if we do not believe that God is with us, then that thought shuts us up in the darkness, puts the interpretation of the mystery far away from us, locks us up in the prison house of sorrow and leaves the key in heaven. But if we believe that God is with us, then the word of despair becomes a word of hope. " God only knows "—yes, but God truly knows, and He is with us to teach us. He is overruling our trouble so that it shall turn to good for us and for those whom we love and for all the world. He knows the joy and peace that have come to those whom we have lost, and He bids us sorrow not for them as those who have no hope. He has undertaken to be our Guide, our Teacher, our Master, through all the sorrow of this mortal life. He is making the present light afflictions work out for us a far more exceeding weight of glory. He is making us perfect through suffering.

This is what He says to us in Christ: " In the world ye shall have tribulations: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world." Yes, sorrow is real, sorrow is bitter, but sorrow with God is the path that leads to a larger, richer life.

The angel of God's face saves us from the sense of loneliness, which is unbearable. Companionship is essential to happiness. A solitary Eden would have been no Paradise. The

deepest of all miseries is the sense of absolute isolation. There are moments in the experience of most of us when the mysterious consciousness of the law which made all human souls separate, like islands,

> "And bade betwixt their shores to be
> The unplumb'd, salt, estranging sea,"

fills us with heaviness of heart. In this painful solitude the present friendship of God is the only sure consolation. Nothing can divide us from Him—not misunderstanding, nor coldness, nor selfishness, nor scorn—for none of these things are possible to Him. Nothing can divide us from Him except our own sin, and that He has forgiven and taken away and blotted out by His great mercy in Christ.

A few years ago a man of great talent, famous for his eloquence, but even better known for the entire unbelief in God which he proclaimed, was called to deliver a funeral address over the grave of his brother. In words of somber pathos he compared this life to a narrow, green valley between the cold peaks of two eternities. We walk here for a little while in company with those whom we love. Then our hands are loosed and our companions vanish. We can see but a little way. Beyond the encircling hills all is gloom and nothingness.

How different is the voice of one whose

heart has known and trusted the angel of the face of God: "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me."

Companionship is the one thing in the world which is absolutely essential to happiness. The human heart needs fellowship more than anything else, fellowship which is elevating and enduring, stronger and purer than itself, and centered in that which death cannot change. All its springs are in God. Without Him life is a failure and all beyond is a blank. Even reason perceives that the recognition of His being and presence makes life as different from that which either theoretical or practical atheism can produce, as light is from darkness. There is absolutely nothing that man cannot do without, except God. With Him happiness is possible anywhere and always. In deepest perils and darkest prisons, in the languor of sickness and the loneliness of sorrow, in the narrow house of poverty and the fiery furnace of pain, on the cross of disgrace and in the black shadow of death, men and women have been happy because God was with them. Yea, they have sung praises so that the other prisoners have heard them. Call to your mind your own experience. How often has the angel of His face delivered you? How often have you trembled, in the distance, at the chained lions between which you passed

unharmed into the House Beautiful? How often have you said of evil: "This will surely destroy me." Yet you found when the trouble came that you had strength given you to bear it, and that you came out of it as one returns from a perilous and difficult journey with a friend, with new memories of companionship and new proofs of love.

We talk of our possessions—of what we own. What are they all compared with the presence and friendship of God?

"The earth shall soon dissolve like snow,
The sun forbear to shine,
But God, who called me here below,
Shall be forever mine."

WARFIELD

JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY
AND TO-DAY, AND FOREVER

ETHELBERT DUDLEY WARFIELD

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JESUS CHRIST, THE SAME YESTERDAY AND TO-DAY, AND FOREVER

PRES. ETHELBERT D. WARFIELD, D.D., LL.D.

"Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and to-day, and forever."—Heb. 13 : 8.

THE books of the Bible are full of one of the peculiar marks of all true literature; brief passages of great and inexhaustible import. It is a commonplace that the conversation of educated men is full of quotations of these gems of thought. Many of them are unconsciously used, having passed into the common speech of the people to such a degree that, like the familiar names of men and things, no one stops to inquire whence they were derived. But familiar as they are these phrases possess an unfailing influence and bear up generation after generation on the broad pinions of their soaring imagery.

Among such passages our text may well be assigned a high place. It has long enjoyed great popularity. It has all the charm of epigram. It possesses the sustained strength of spiritual significance. It trips lightly upon the lips of the superficial and imaginative, and dwells fruitfully in the mind of the scholar.

It is full of satisfaction to the tenderly pious, and rich in suggestion to the devoutly speculative. It speaks primarily only of the permanence of character of Jesus Christ, but the context forces upon us at once a broader outlook. The writer of the letter to the Hebrews had in mind a much greater theme than the unity, perfection and permanence of the character of the man Christ Jesus. His purpose was nothing less than to prove to the Hebrews in Judea and to the farthest limits of their world-wide dispersion that Jesus Christ was the Messiah; and being the Messiah, was the hope of Israel and the Savior of mankind. Hence this finely fashioned phrase embodies a tremendous truth. It declares the permanence of character of Jesus Christ indeed, the continuance of His personality also; but it links these in an unbroken existence utterly incompatible with mere humanity. The enunciation of this doctrine is not new. It had been already set forth in not less striking language in the first chapter of the epistle. There, however, he is rather leading up to the assertion contained in our text and is setting forth the prophecies concerning the Messiah, who is referred to as the Son and as already come. There he says:

"Thou Lord in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they shall perish but thou remainest, they shall all wax old as doth

a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: . . . but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail."

This is the one, then, to whom John refers in similar language in the opening words of the Revelation as "He which is, and which was, and which is to come." The only other possible parallel is to be found in that beautiful psalm, (the 90th), which is given the title, "A prayer of Moses the Servant of God," where it is said of God the Creator: . . . "from everlasting to everlasting thou art God." This parallel is not merely a parallel, but an identification. We see in this psalm the work of the creative Word, so beautifully described in the first chapter of John's Gospel:

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God, the same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him and without him was not anything made that was made."

The identification intended by the writer of the epistle is thus evident. Jesus Christ is to him something more than man. Eternity is a part of His being; changelessness, an attribute of His nature. He not only shall endure to all eternity, He is from everlasting.

Such in brief is the conception of the writer of these words. Let us for a little season expand them that we may enjoy the same great

picture that they presented to the writer as he penned them.

It is easy to gather from the preceeding chapters of this book that the writer circumscribed his vision by no narrow bounds. His yesterday was conceived in the same sense as Moses thought of it in the beautiful song already quoted when he said: "A thousand years are in thy sight but as yesterday." The yesterday of Jesus Christ extends back to the dawning of the creative day when the morning stars sang together, before the mountains were brought forth or the earth was formed. But our writer is not content to view Him in some dim abstraction. While he rises to the sublime thought that He was, indeed, the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person, upholding all things by the word of His power and worshiped of angels, he deals with Him definitely as the Promised One. He sees in Him the One foretold by many a prophet of old and destined to make good the covenant of God with Abraham. There are few historical summaries so picturesque and perfect as that in the eleventh chapter in which the heroes of faith are set before us, heroes of the faith of old in the coming of One mighty to save. We do not need to follow the long line of the unfolding purpose of God. Let us only mark that the occasion of the promise was man's sin and his consequent fall from his estate of inno-

cency; that the cause of the promise was the love of God for His erring children; that the necessity of the promise was God's justice which could not suffer its violation to pass unpunished lest wickedness should prevail and goodness be disowned; that the end of the promise was the reconciliation of men to God; that the fulfilment of the promise was Jesus Christ Himself, His person, His incarnation, His atonement, His resurrection, His mediatorial intercession.

Through the ages one increasing purpose ran till at length Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem and cradled in the manger there. Let us not mystify ourselves with vague images. This Child, was the very Son of God. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost. He was born of the virgin Mary. He was not the Son of God in the same sense that we are, or may be, sons of God. He was of the same nature with God, begotten not made. We share but the creative sonship lost in the fall, and the adoptive right granted by Christ Himself. Of whom of us can it be said as the Holy Spirit said of Jesus: "Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners." We come not hither with any purpose. He alone came of His own will, to do His own work.

To that manger-cradle came the waiting shepherds of the Judean hills, and the wise men of the not less expectant and sin-saddened Gentiles. Round that cradle-manger,

uncovered by the hands of the evangelists, after ages have stood in silent worship or rejoicing praise. No rare genius was cradled there, that thus the homage of the ages is rendered to His infant resting-place. This child is the very Son of God, and this cradle is the fountain head of a stream of history.

We know but little of the years that followed the birth of Jesus till His active ministry began. One or two bright flashes of His passing life lighten the pages of the gospels. We are left to imagine the quiet happiness of the home in Nazareth, the sweet content of Mary's mother heart, the growing trust and friendliness of His fellow-men. We are simply permitted to carry on the words: "And Jesus increased in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man," until at length His hour was come and He set vigorously to work about His Father's business.

There is no kind of writing so interesting as biography, and scarcely any is so difficult. The world has a few great biographies and autobiographies and treasures them wisely. The notable defect of this kind of composition is that it usually dwells too much upon the external side of life, or if it treats of thoughts rather than deeds, it is likely to descend to trivialities. Of the life and death of Jesus Christ we have the most perfect of records. It is not complete in the sense of being exhaustive, but it gives us in the most simple,

yet noble language the most sublime picture of Him whose life it is meant to portray. From a merely literary point of view we cannot but marvel at the skill with which we are led to the cattle shed of Bethlehem, presented with the contrast between the hideous debauchee, Herod, the Great as men hailed him, on the throne and Jesus in the manger, thence by many a scene of city and of country, of lake and river and mountain, where teaching His high doctrines, healing the sick and afflicted, He made His way steadily towards the overpowering sorrow and the overwhelming triumph of Calvary.

Men from the first have found it hard to grasp all that the few simple records of the gospels relate. To some Jesus has been and must ever be the great teacher; to others the great physician; to yet others the great preacher. Some have even refused to see in Him anything for which they should desire Him, some have seen in Him only one of the prophets, but thousands of others have seen in Him the Lamb of God which taketh away the sins of the world and have devoutly cried with the aroused and eager Thomas: "My Lord and my God."

Much depends upon our being His true disciples; that is upon our giving ourselves up to His guidance. If we do we shall not be content to hear Him by the side of sleeping Galilee, or to walk with Him on the storm-tossed

waves; to see Him heal the leper, or raise the dead Lazarus from the grave. We must go with Him to Calvary. We must know Him not only as the Lord of Life, we must know Him also as the "sacrifice for sin." We must behold Him on the cross not as the victim of Jewish wrath and blindness but of our own sins. When we can realize that He bore our sins upon the cross; that He was made a sacrifice for us; we begin the appreciate Him. Then we begin to understand the purpose of the long gone yesterday which brightened the gloom that blotted out Paradise, and dimly to realize the divine nature of Him who is our Savior.

To the cross succeeds the sepulcher—the sepulcher empty on the morning of the third day; to the dying Savior succeeds the risen Lord—once more we see Him as the Lord of life; but we can never forget that He died—even tho He rose again—that He died to give us life, that He rose again because He had power to lose His life and power to take it again.

Such to the writer of the letter to the Hebrews was the Jesus Christ of yesterday; the promised Messiah, the babe of Bethlehem, the crucified Savior, the risen Lord. This is the historic Jesus, the Jesus of all true history. Men may not always see the essential features of this biography in the same light. But no real student of biography ever neglects the

ancestry and other formative influences of the subjects of his study. To neglect the stories of Genesis, the songs of the Psalms, the prophecies of Isaiah and the rest of the prophets, in their bearing upon the life of Jesus of Nazareth, is like neglecting the sources of any man or nation. Jesus Christ was the child of prophecy and in Him the sure words of prophecy are plainly fulfilled.

But it is also true that the real meaning of a man's life can only be understood by a knowledge of the influence of his life upon after times. If Jesus Christ was indeed the Son of God His sojourning upon earth could not fail to be a source of deep influence upon succeeding centuries. The great question that confronted the apostles was, How was that influence to be exercised. The Jews were not unnaturally circumscribed in vision by their knowledge and experience. They had looked forward to the coming of a grander Moses and a larger Solomon. They had learned lessons of worldly pomp and power from the Greek Alexander and the Roman commanders and they had formed their ideals from the antique sages and recent conquerors. Even the more devoutly minded could scarcely keep their thoughts, even after His ascension, away from the captivating splendor of His second coming. It was only the more consecrated who were content to dwell upon the Lord's kingdom upon earth as a growing empire over

the minds and hearts of men. But such was the promise of prophecy, such was destined to be the fulfilment of history. He is the same to-day as yesterday, Lord of the hearts and minds of men, not the ruler over an outward kingdom on earth.

The greatest fact of history is the conquest of this world by the Church of Jesus Christ. To justify such a phrase we must not think of the Church as an institution so much as a spiritual force. From the little handful of men who gathered in Jerusalem in fearful secrecy after their Master's crucifixion, there came forth a world force. They were unlearned and ignorant, they belonged to a despised people and were outcast even from it. But in them burned a fire of fervent faith which was justified by its object and has been sustained by its results. The power that lay in this faith was as far as possible from the strength to be found in many of the rich philosophies and cults of human origin. Men love still to sit at the feet of Socrates because of the vigor of his dissection of the human mind in action, to learn from Aristotle because of the keenness of his logical analysis, to hearken to Cicero because of his gentle friendliness. But tho Plato lifted the ideals of Socrates to the gates of heaven he could not open them, and tho Cicero taught men forbearance he did not rise to the conception of brotherly love. So in the modern world those

who teach a broad humanity and those who prattle of "sweetness and light," fail alike in opening to man the deeper things of his own heart and the higher things of heaven.

The power that lies in the Gospel of Jesus Christ lies in the personality and sacrifice of Christ; in the fact that He, "being the eternal Son of God, became man, and continueth to be God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever." He is and ever will be the same. As the writer of this epistle says, He is still touched with the feeling of our infirmities—He who was made sin for us, tho He Himself knew no sin. As He loved us from the foundation of the earth, so He loves us still and as an high priest in heaven makes intercession for us. For this man, because He continueth ever, "hath an unchangeable priesthood."

This indeed is for all of us the Jesus Christ of our to-day. He ever liveth to make intercession for the sins of His people. This continued existence in the same character is the justification of all our prayers. We know whom we have believed. We know His nature and His work, we know that He hears us when we pray and by His continued intercession speeds the gracious answer to our prayers.

This I have said is far removed from human philosophies and cults, both as a philosophical conception and a practical ideal.

Human systems are invariably self-centered. Do this and so, and thereby justify your highest nature, is their appeal. We hear Socrates urging men to hear the voice of conscience in the heart, and Cicero speaking of right reason, and modern sentimentalists of sweet reasonableness. But Jesus Christ justifies the stern mandate of eternal justice with its mighty call to duty by bowing before it; and breathes the blessing of love by showing how His love has bridged the chasm which man's sin had opened between the justice of God and His goodness and mercy, and how love for Him can lead us through lives of purity and peace to the rest prepared for those who love Him.

This is not the kind of ideal for men proud of mental and moral powers to produce. But it is the kind of ideal that lifts poor sinful men and women up to God. How often have men tried to pollute the pure stream of gospel truth. In the very earliest age Greek philosophy began to muddy the stream, then Roman absolutism, then medieval ignorance, then feudal force, and finally modern worldly mindedness, each working in myriad forms physically formidable and intellectually enticing. But through it all the hearts of simple men and women have remained true to the Christ of the gospel. We who are students of intellectual movements exaggerate the importance of the Gnosticism of the early cen-

turies; the formalism of the Middle Ages, and the rationalism of to-day. The Church was threatened by Gnosticism but the plain and pregnant sentences of the Apostles' Creed are a continuing memorial of the real spiritual soundness of the Church of that age; the Roman hierarchy did harm to the Church it ruled with worldly pride, but that Church bred not only Augustine, and Ambrose, Savonarola and Gottschalk, Wyclif and Huss, Luther and Calvin, Latimer and Knox, but thousands of devoted parish priests untouched by pride and unsmirched by simony, and millions of men who were partakers of Christ's sacrifice; the deistic deadness of the English Church in the eighteenth century is proved to have been more among the higher ranks of society than of faith by the life and work of John Wesley; and to-day when men are boasting themselves of the acumen which they are exhibiting in uncritically critical assaults upon the impregnable rock of holy Scripture the blesséd Bible grows year by year better known and more deeply venerated by millions of those who know that in it, and it alone, they have a part in everlasting life.

To the Church, the true Church of simple believing men and women, Jesus Christ has ever been the same through the long ages. Men may speculate, men may distinguish and discuss, as they will, but the world has never lost its recognition of Jesus Christ mighty

to save since the fulness of the truth burst on the waiting disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem. And if, as Paul tells us, God in ages past "left not himself without a witness," so in the time to come we can confidently believe that the very truth of God shall never fade, but grow brighter and brighter in the ever growing knowledge of Jesus Christ, the wisdom of God, and the power of God.

If such is the Jesus Christ of yesterday and to-day, what shall we say of Him in the to-morrow?

First, clearly enough, that He will be the same that He has ever been. We are told by John in the beginning of his wonderful transcript of Jesus' heavenly discourse after the last supper, that "having loved his own which were in the world he loved them unto the end." And we have many assurances in the beautiful words that follow that that love was not confined to that little company, nor limited to the end of His earthly life of sacrifice. That love infinitely tender, ineffable, sublime, was a love broad enough to embrace all men, deep enough to wring even the heart of the Son of God, lasting enough to continue from creation's dawn till the last trump shall sound above a vacant earth and beside a shoreless sea; that love is the warrant for our every hope and our exceeding great reward.

Nor pen, nor voice, can ever depict the fulness of reward of them who share the joy of

the redeemed with their risen Lord in heaven. The Holy Spirit has drawn by the hand of the apostle in the book of Revelation visions of that happy time, and those images have long haunted the minds of those who with eager expectation await the coming of their Lord. One promise among the many which crowd these wonderful pages must be the crowning joy. It is not the prospect of the city of God coming down out of the heaven, with its gates of pearl, its foundation of jewels, and its streets of gold. Infinitely above all splendors known and unknown rises the word of the promise to them who enter in: "And they shall see his face." What speechless bliss will it be to behold at last the desired of every age—to see the King in His beauty!

There is another promise to which we may well take heed, and in taking heed find hope and help. It is written on the last page of the closing scroll of the Old Testament, where Malachi writes: "they shall be mine, saith the Lord of hosts in that day when I make up my jewels, and I shall spare them as a man spareth his own son." And again John says: "Beloved now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be; but we know that when he shall appear we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is."

"We shall be like him!"

We shall be like the King in His beauty; not the beauty of face, or form, or raiment,

beautiful as they shall be, but the beauty of holiness—like Jesus Christ in mind, in heart, in soul. O blesséd transformation! It was for this that He hung upon the cross on Calvary. It is through that sacrifice alone that we can put off our own righteousness, and be clothed upon with His spirit, and be made like Him.

WARMAN

THE PREACHING OF PAUL

F. S. GUY WARMAN

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THE PREACHING OF PAUL

PRINCIPAL F. S. GUY WARMAN, B.D.

"I determined not to know anything among you, save Jesus Christ and him crucified."—1 Cor. 2 : 2.

WE cannot help noticing the reiterated emphasis with which Paul expresses his determination. Elsewhere his theme is the same but nowhere does he narrow himself down to it so much as here. In the previous chapter twice over he puts his position; "Christ sent me not to baptize but to preach the gospel . . . lest the cross of Christ should be made of none effect; for the preaching of the cross . . . is the power of God" (1 Cor. 17 : 15). And again "We preach Christ crucified . . . the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 25 : 24). Why this exceptional determination on his first visit to Corinth? Can we ascertain the cause? I believe we can, at least in part. Let us turn back to the history. In Acts 18 we read that Paul came to Corinth and "testified that Jesus was the Christ." The text explains the nature and limits of the testimony. It was the preaching of the cross; and it was effective; "many hearing believed and were baptized." Paul's determination was justified by its results. Perhaps

in an experience before he came to Corinth we can discover the secret of that determination. He had come from Athens. There, while waiting for friends, he had noticed the idolatry of the city and had tried to preach the gospel. He preached "Jesus and the resurrection." He is noticed, wins the ear of the cultured class and preaches to them. A summary of that sermon is handed down to us. It was evidently learned and philosophical; to modern ears it sounds liberal and broad-minded. There is very little about the Lord Jesus Christ in it, very little about sin and atonement, nothing of the cross, nothing of the dying for sinners. It was apparently an effort —sometimes such an effort is needed and there is no disparagement in the criticism— to win the way for more by yielding to the spirit of the age and the place. There is temptation to-day to let this unique utterance of Paul become the model of our preaching. We want liberality, we want broadmindedness. The old plan of salvation humbles man's proper pride and puzzles his intellect. Cannot we be rid of it? And the result sometimes is a nebulous gospel; if that can be called a gospel which hurts no one's feelings and rouses no one's resentment. Perhaps we can borrow a useful lesson from Paul's experience. They listened; some mocked; most just passed on and Paul left Athens. There were results, small indeed—Dionysius, a woman

named Damaris, and some others, but there was no future visit, no letters to the Athenians, no Athenian church, and for Paul himself there seems to have been a determination never to preach so again. He passes on to Corinth, determined to know nothing save Jesus Christ and Him crucified. Maybe I have overdrawn the picture; doubtless in its fuller form the sermon contained more of the gospel, but the Athenian sermon with its so-called liberal theology and the Athenian failure—for comparative failure it was—may have had, probably did have, much to do with the Corinthian determination.

We turn to the topic of the Corinthian preaching—Jesus Christ and Him crucified—a person and a fact, and to the person first.

Obviously Paul's preaching is the consummation of an experience, not merely of an incident at Athens, but of a personal life of his own. His theology was based on his personal experience. No theology is worth much in its preaching that is not so based. Theology has been called a science and religion a philosophy, but it has been sometimes forgotten in its speculations that it is and must be preached and experienced, or it fails of its object. It was intensely so with Paul—go back to the Saul who stoned Stephen and committed the faithful to prison. He was a man of conviction and enthusiasm, of moral integrity and real earnestness; but the person of

Christ became a reality to him. He was the same man afterwards but much more. There had come a new relationship to God, a new spiritual life. Jesus Christ crossed his vision; Jesus whom he had persecuted, and the person of Jesus became everything to him, example, conscience, ideal, object of allegiance and faith, Lord, ay and Savior. "The personality of Jesus was the ladder on which he reached to God." So someone has wisely said and there is the essence of Christianity in that sentence. A Christless Christianity is unthinkable; but a Christianity which does not revolve round the central figure of its being is a danger of our modern thought. The person of Jesus was a gigantic force to Paul and it is so still and in stronger development; it must be so or the world will fail the Christ. The past triumphs of the person of Christ are easy to recall. His personality is the basis of the world's philanthropy. His dealings with the sick founded the hospitals. The healing ministry of Christ finds its legitimate consequence in the labors of the medical profession rather than in the vagaries of Christian science, falsely so-called. His blessing of the children inspired the orphanage. Müller and Barnardo could find the impulse that set them to work nowhere else than in the person of Christ. He and His ideas have been the controlling influences of the world's best men. Many who would be the least ready to own

Him, are certainly not the least influenced by Him. Again He is the basis of the world's morals. Even John Stuart Mill concedes this place to Him and few care to dispute it. But He is infinitely more: His person is the center of devotion, the object of love and reverence on the part of millions, He is all in all, the chiefest among ten thousand to them who have learnt to know Him. So men preach Christ and truly; so we must preach Him and the world is ready to listen, just as, to a certain extent, at least, Athens was ready to listen; but this preaching is not the whole gospel and we must not stay our preaching or our faith here. Paul not only preached a person but he added a fact about that person, and it is in that fact that the salvation of the world is bound up—"Jesus Christ and Him crucified." Paul knew all the difficulty of adding this: to the religious an offense and a hindrance; to the cultured a piece of folly and a ground for resentment. It is so still. The doctrine of the atonement is so difficult, it is so variously treated, we have to choose among Augustine and Anselm and Abelard and many more. Why preach it? Why did Paul preach it? Because it is not merely a doctrine to be argued about, but a fact; because it was part of Paul's experience and a vital part, and must be so with us. Let us trace it in Paul's case. The vision of Jesus on the Damascus road discovered to him his own

weakness and unworthiness. He found in himself the individual application of the universal law of sin. He, proud Pharisee that he was, realized then the need of the publican's prayer, and all through his life and his writings we can hear the anguished cry, "God be merciful to me a sinner." It is not mere fear of the penalty, but the misery of sin itself; not the fact of failure, but the impossibility of holiness, the stain sin leaves and its ever present power. But we not only hear the cry we hear its answer from God Himself. The cross of Calvary is God's answer to the world's need. The vision of Jesus Christ and Him crucified discovered to Paul not only the fact of sin but its remedy. Explain it or explain it away as you will, there is Paul's teaching that the cross of Christ is the cure for human sin. In Gethsemane and Calvary you have Christ in touch with sin, and, however you may explain it or however far you fall short of an explanation, *there* was atonement made. It is not only a fact of Pentecost, but it is a fact in the experience of millions from Paul downward. Hence we preach: hence we appropriate Jesus Christ and Him crucified. It it the gospel for to-day with all its so-called gospels, with all its indifference and levity, with its depreciation of sin and its exaltation of mere morality; it is the only gospel for sin-stained humanity.

WEIDNER

LESSONS FROM AN ANCIENT PROPHET

REVERE FRANKLIN WEIDNER

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LESSONS FROM AN ANCIENT PROPHET

PRES. R. F. WEIDNER, D.D., LL.D.

"The words of Amos, who was among the herdmen of Tekoa, which he saw concerning Israel in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel, two years before the earthquake."—Amos 1 : 1.

THE prophets of the ancient Jewish Church were subject to no earthly tribunal, bound by no rules of discipline. Their function was not limited to the disclosure of the future. They had also a practical office to discharge. They were the preachers, the poets, the political teachers and counselors of Palestine. They were bold, courageous, heroic, devout men, fearing God, not fearing men, denouncing alike the sins of the great, the corruptions of the Jewish Church, and the vices of the people. They were watchmen set upon the walls of Zion to blow the trumpet and give timely warning of the approaching danger (Ez. 33 : 7). They were the ambassadors of God, even as the ministry of the Christian Church, beseeching men to turn from their evil ways and live.

Amos was one of the earliest of the prophets. The text limits the period between 810

B. C. and 783 B. C., for he prophesied "in the days of Uzziah king of Judah, and in the days of Jeroboam the son of Joash king of Israel." These two kings were contemporary twenty-seven years, and in this period Amos delivered his prophecy. It was two years before that terrible earthquake to which the prophet Zechariah also refers, but the precise date of this earthquake is unknown.

Let us give attention first to the personal life of Amos. While Jonah was prophesying against the Ninevites and Joel was sounding the warning cry of danger to the people of Judah, in the footsteps of Hosea, a prophet from Judah comes to denounce the crimes of the Ten Tribes. Amos suddenly appears, of no prophetic school, with no regular prophetic gifts, a shepherd from the wild uplands of the district of Tekoa, a fortified town among the hills of Judah, about six miles south of Bethlehem. By preeminence we may call him the peasant prophet. He kept his sheep and goats on the wild hills of Judea, as Nabal on a grander scale, and David on a humbler scale had kept them before him. He cultivated sycamore trees for his support. While following the flock the call of the Lord had come unto him to leave his home and his nation, and to go and prophesy unto Israel. In obedience to the summons he repaired to Bethel, the chief seat of the idol worship among the ten tribes, and announced to the careless peo-

ple the judgment of God upon their wickedness. And it was high time that such a bold prophet did appear. The kingdom of the ten tribes had now reached the zenith of its power. But under this outward pomp and prosperity there was a deep moral decay. The comfortable prosperity of the people passed into such debauchery and excess that the austere Israel of old could hardly be recognized. The clearest sign of the degradation of public morality was furnished then, as at all similar times, by the growing effrontery of the women and the decline of domestic morality. The people did not see their corruption. God sent drought, failure of crops, locusts, pestilence, and finally they were visited by a great earthquake, so terrible in its devastation that for a long time the years were reckoned from that event; yet in spite of all these warnings the people continued in their arrogant security, and in their luxurious comfort, of which they were so fond. They no longer believed in a retributive, sin-avenging righteousness. They forgot that what a man sows he must also reap.

Drunkenness in its most revolting form was prevalent. No class of society was exempt. This vice was the canker, the curse of Palestine. Out of it sprang a brood of yet more desolating sins, licentiousness in all its forms, oppression of the poor, self-indulgent luxury, robbery and murder. To the eyes of the

prophet "there it was, and there was nothing else which he saw, wherever he looked, whatever he heard—swearing, lying, killing, stealing, adultery," one stream of blood meeting another, "till they joined in one wide inundation." Many of the details are preserved to us. Innocent debtors were bought and sold as slaves, even for the sake of possessing a pair of costly sandals. The very dust which they threw on their heads as a sign of mourning was grudged to them. They changed their wheat measures, making the ephah smaller, thus cheating the buyer. They mixed the poor wheat, the refuse, with the good wheat and then palmed it off as wheat of the first quality. They falsified the balances. Bribery was practised in the seats of judgment. Enormous landed property was accumulated against the whole spirit of the Israelite commonwealth. They skinned the poor to the very quick. The great ladies of the city were haughty, and paced along the streets tossing their heads, walking and mincing as they went, covered with tinkling ornaments, chains, bracelets, mantles, veils of all fashions and sizes. Isaiah especially cries out against this outrage of fashion. "In that day the Lord will take away your tinkling ornaments, your pieces of net-work, the eardrops and the bracelets and the fine veils, the bonnets and the sashes and the scent-bottles and the amulets, the rings and the changeable

suits of apparel, the mantles and the cloaks, the purses and the crisping pins, the glasses and the fine linen" (Isa. 3 : 16-26). Licentious rites were practised in the groves and on the hilltops. Tho they kept the outward forms of religion, observed holy days, yet in the very temple at Bethel they carried on their revelry. Pilgrims coming to the sacred places were attacked by bands of robbers, often headed by the priests themselves.

Need we be surprised that our prophet was not well received; that the priest of Bethel addrest these words to Amos: "O thou seer, go, flee thee away into the land of Judah, and there eat bread and prophesy there; but prophesy not again any more at Bethel." Not only were the people thus living in open rebellion to God, but they dwelt in careless security. The prophecy of Joel had given fair warning of a judgment of God to be visited upon His people, if they repented not. These warnings of Joel were well known. But the corrupt people perverted their terms, and the promise of salvation was made a pretext for careless security. They regarded the day of the Lord as coming indeed as a divine judgment, but not upon them; this judgment was meant for the heathen, they were in no danger, the Lord would provide salvation for them. Were they not His chosen people? Were they not much better than the nations around them?

But Amos, like a true watchman of Israel, awakens them from their lethargy. He boldly cries out: "Wo unto you that desire the day of the Lord! to what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light."

His words cut Israel to the quick; they stand out boldly in all their rugged brevity and simplicity. The influence of the shepherd life of Amos appears in his prophecy, especially in those sublime passages in which he describes the mighty workings of God. His shepherd life had made him familiar with those awful and sudden changes of nature, so liable to occur in Palestine. The starry heavens had often witnessed the silent intercourse of his soul with God. His religious life amid the scenes of nature, accustomed him as well as David, to express his thoughts in words taken from the great picture-book of nature, which, as being also written by the hand of God, so wonderfully expresses the things of God. His imagery, in fact, from its freshness and appropriateness, almost reminds us of Dante, and entitles him to as high a place in the history of literature as in that of religion. He spake in the language of parables. His words are what we might call the words of "a child of nature." The imagery of his visions is full of country life. He speaks of the locusts in the meadows, the basket of fruits, vineyards and fig-trees, the heavy-laden wagon, the sifting of corn, the

selling of wheat; he alludes to the herds of cows rushing heedlessly down the hills of Samaria, to the lion and the bear, to the deep clefts in the mountain passes, to the foaming torrents that rush to the Dead Sea.

And yet our shepherd prophet is in no wise behind the very chiefest prophets; in the loftiness of his thoughts and the magnificence of his spirit almost equal to the highest; and in the splendor of diction and elegance of composition scarcely inferior to any. For the illuminating spirit of God was with him, he was endued with the power and wisdom of God. The Holy Spirit gave him utterance. Scarcely any prophet is more glowing in style, or combines in a more wonderful manner the natural and moral world, the omnipotence and omniscience of God.

The prophecy is unrolled before us as from a scroll. It consists of nine chapters, containing chiefly threatenings against the kingdom of the Ten Tribes.

The first and second chapters are a sort of introduction to the prophecy. By way of preface the storm of divine wrath rolls around the outlying kingdoms until it comes to a stand in Israel. The nations around Israel are taken up in order, Damascus, Philistia, Tyre, Edom, Ammon, and Moab, against each of which the divine wrath is announced in short, similar sentences. It is peculiar that the threatenings throughout both chapters ad-

drest to the eight different nations are always introduced in the same manner. Eight times does Amos cry out: "Thus saith Jehovah: For three transgressions, and for four, I will not turn away the punishment thereof." Then, having described the transgression of each particular nation, the prophet announces the several judgments that shall fall upon them: "a kindling of fire" in their capitals, the fire of war, conquest and destruction. Even the kingdom of Judah was included in this list of nations. But now the prophetic burden falls on Israel. The previous denunciations were intended only to pave the way for this one. Amos was sent to prophesy against Israel.

The second part of the prophecy contains four chapters. Amos announces the judgment of God upon the prevailing sins of the great men of the Ten Tribes. These chapters are four discourses, each chapter being a separate address, and the first three begin with "Hear this word." The argument is: As surely as I, Amos, am sent from God as a messenger of warning, so surely will God punish Israel. How can you expect God to walk with you and bless you, unless you conform to His will?

"Can two walk together,
Except they be agreed?
Will a lion roar in the forest
When he hath no prey?
Does a bird fall into a trap on the ground

When there is no snare for him?
Shall a trumpet be blown in the city,
And the people not be alarmed?
Does misfortune fall on a city,
And Jehovah has not caused it?
Therefore thus saith the Lord Jehovah,
An enemy there shall be, even round about the land,
And he shall bring down thy strength from thee,
And thy palaces shall be plundered."

In the fourth chapter the burden is: Punishment must come, since despite all chastisement the people will not amend.

" Hear this word, Ye
Who oppress the poor,
Who crush the needy,
Who say to their lords,
Bring hither that we may drink.
I, even I, have withheld the rain from you,
When there were yet three months to the harvest;
And have caused it to rain upon one city,
And caused it not to rain upon another.
I have smitten you with blight and mildew;
And the multitude of your gardens and your vineyards,
And your fig trees and olive trees the locust devoured;
And ye have not returned unto me, saith Jehovah.
I have sent pestilence among you in the manner of Egypt;
I have overthrown among [some of] you
As God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah,
And ye were like a brand plucked out of the burning;
And still ye have not returned unto me.
Therefore, thus will I do to thee, O Israel:
Because I will do this to thee,
Prepare to meet thy God, O Israel.
For, behold, he that formeth the mountains and createth the wind,

And declareth to man what is his thought,
Who maketh dawn and darkness,
And goeth over the high places of the earth,
Jehovah, God of hosts, is his name.''

In the fifth chapter the prophet laments over the fall of Israel. Israel might easily be saved if they would seek the Lord, but this they will not do.

'' Woe to the fools who desire the day of the Lord!
What good is it to you?
The day of Jehovah! it is darkness and not light.
As if a man fleeth before the lion,
And the bear met him;
Or he goes into the house
And rests his hand upon the wall
And the snake bites him.
Is not for you the day of Jehovah
Darkness and not light?
I hate, I despise your feasts;
I take no delight in your assembles;
I will carry you away captive beyond Damascus,
Saith Jehovah, whose name is God of hosts.''

In the sixth chapter the burden of the prophecy is: Wo to the secure who think that the day of the Lord is far off.

'' Ye who put far off the evil day,
And bring near the seat of violence;
Who lie upon beds of ivory
And stretch themselves upon their couches;
Who trill to the sound of the harp,
Who anoint themselves with the best oils,
And do not grieve for the hurt of Joseph.
Behold I raise up over you, O house of Israel,

Saith Jehovah, God of hosts, a nation,
And it shall oppress you from the entrance Hemath
to the brook of the desert."

The last part of the prophecy of Amos, chapters seven, eight and nine, contains five visions. In the seventh and eighth chapters we have an account of four visions, one of locusts, another of fire, a third of the plumb-line, and a fourth of a basket of ripe fruit. These symbolize the judgments which God would cause to fall upon the apostate people. The first two judgments, locusts and extreme droughts [fire], are averted at the prayer of the prophet. The third vision of the plumb-line indicates the certain downfall of the kingdom. The basket of ripe fruit is the image of a people ripe for judgment. In the fifth vision, recorded in the ninth chapter, the last of the prophecy, the prophet sees under the image of an overthrow of the temple at Bethel, the utter ruin of the kingdom by a divine judgment which none can escape. They shall be carried into captivity. Still God in His grace will not destroy them utterly, but only sift them.

"Behold, the eyes of the Lord, Jehovah, are upon the sinful kingdom,
And I will destroy it
From off the face of the earth,
Save that I will not utterly destroy the house of Jacob, saith the Lord.
For behold, I, I will command

And will shake the house of Israel among all nations,
As one shaketh a sieve;
And not even a little grain shall fall to the ground."

The prophecy ends with the promise of a new deliverance to the house of Israel.

"Behold, the days are coming, saith Jehovah,
When the plowman shall overtake the reaper,
And the treader of grapes him that soweth seed;
And the mountains shall drop sweet wine,
And all the hills melt:
And I bring back the captivity of my people, Israel,
And they build the waste cities, and inhabit them;
And plant vineyards and drink their wine;
And make gardens and eat their fruit;
And I will plant them upon their land,
And they shall no more be torn up out of their land
which I gave them,
Saith Jehovah, thy God."

How wonderful are the judgments of God, His ways are past finding out. The voice of Amos had scarcely ceased to give the warning cry of danger before the judgments began to visit the surrounding nations. Tiglath-Pileser, king of Assyria, laid siege to Damascus, destroyed the city and carried the inhabitants thereof into captivity. The words of Isaiah and Amos, which they had prophesied in the day of its prosperity, that Damascus should be "taken away from being a city and be a ruinous heap," that "a fire should be sent into the house of Hazael, which should devour the palaces of Ben-hadad, were so literally fulfilled that Jeremiah, writing one hundred

and fifty years later, declares in his prophecy, "Damascus is waxed feeble; she turneth herself to flee and fear hath seized on her. How is the city of praise not left, the city of my joy!" The same fate befell Gaza, Ashdod, Ashkelon, Ekron and the other cities of Philistia. Tyre and Edom, Ammon and Moab, were ravaged again and again by the savage hordes from the east and north. At different times and in different ways the punishment and judgment foretold by Amos was meted out to them. So likewise did all the calamities which Amos describes in his prophecy gather fast over the kingdom of the Ten Tribes. In less than seventy years the storm with its judgments came. The locusts came from the south and destroyed the gardens and vineyards, the fig trees and olive trees of Samaria. Their corn and wine failed, blasting and mildew smote them, drought and famine fell upon them. The plague with its terrible destruction visited them. But all these visitations were but forerunners of a still more fearful calamity. Now, for the first time appeared on the eastern horizon that great power which for a hundred years was the scourge of Asia. Long before its actual irruption the rise of the new power is noted by the prophets. Jonah had already traversed the desert and seen "that great Nineveh." Not only did Amos see the nations one by one swept into captivity, but Hosea brings out the

danger more definitely by naming it. The wakeful ear of Isaiah catches the sound of the irresistible advance of the Assyrian armies long before they threatened Israel; he describes their savage warfare, their strange language, the speed of their march, their indefatigable energy, their arrows sharp, their bows bent, their horses' hoofs like flint, and their chariots like a whirlwind. In 723 B. C. Shalmaneser, king of Assyria, marched against Israel, and after overrunning the country, laid siege to Samaria. Then followed one of those memorable defenses, the despairing efforts of dying nations. We have no details of the siege; but Isaiah gives a glowing description of the mighty instrument of Jehovah smiting like a hailstorm the glorious beauty of the city, which towered on its hill like a crown of pride. For three long years the people of the city held out, during which time we learn from Assyrian monuments that Shalmaneser died and was succeeded by his son Sargon. As the end drew near, the people gave themselves up to the frantic revelings of despair. At last the city was stormed. The infants were hurled down the rocky sides of the hill on which the city stood. Famine and pestilence completed the work of war. The stones of the ruined city were poured down into the rich valley below and the foundations laid bare. Sargon himself records the capture of Samaria in the following terms: "Samaria I

looked at, I captured; twenty-seven thousand, two hundred and eighty families who dwelt in it I carried away." According to the Scripture narrative as recorded in 2 Kings, 17 : 6, we learn that he " carried Israel away into Assyria and placed them in Halah, and by Habor by the rivers of Gozan, and in the mountains of the Medes."

The prophecy of Amos was fulfilled. The Ten Tribes of Israel were carried away into captivity and have never been restored.

With reference to the last prophecy, the new deliverance, when Israel will be richly blest and made great and powerful, this " raising up of David's fallen hut " commenced with the coming of Christ and the founding of the Christian Church by the apostles, its complete fulfilment is to be expected at the second coming of Christ.

But some may say, What has the prophecy of Amos to do with us, the people of the new covenant? Much in every way. These things " were written for our learning." God has ever warned the world of coming judgments in order that it may not incur them. He has revealed to us hell, in order that we may escape hell. He warned Noah of the coming deluge. He told Abraham and Lot of the future judgment on Sodom and the cities of the plain. He revealed to Joseph the seven years' famine, and to Moses and to Pharaoh the ten plagues; to Moses and Joshua and the

prophets, all the chastisement of His people; to Jonah, the destruction of Nineveh; to Isaiah, Hosea and Amos, the destruction of the kingdom of Israel; by Christ and His apostles He foretold the fall of Jerusalem; and Christ has warned all of His own future coming to judge the world. God does this in order that men may repent; and if they obstinately continue in sin, He may be justified in executing punishment upon them. The prophecy of Amos is so true to nature, so descriptive of the sins of actual States, churches and individuals, that faithful preachers in dark days of the history of the Church have used this prophet as a text-book to denounce the sins of the people. When Savonarola wished to denounce the sins of Florence, he poured down upon the heads of the people the warning cry of Amos. The sermons of Luther on this prophecy are almost like Amos himself come to life again.

We learn from this prophecy that sin and punishment are by a great law of God bound together. It is one of God's greatest benefits that He gives us His word containing the revelation of His will; that He points out the way not only to our temporal welfare, but to eternal blessedness. To despise such a gift is the grossest ingratitude. God is long-suffering and ready to forgive; He tries all means to win men before proceeding to extremities. But if His benefits are not recognized He

sends chastisements. At first their aim is to open the eyes of those who know not God, so that men may seek the Lord. He waits long in the hope that there will be a change. Shall all the warnings of God be in vain? Will not even those who live in gospel days take heed and watch and pray lest their sin overtake them suddenly? Man knows what he has to do, and what to expect. The terrible social and political phenomena of the present times will not disturb the mind of the Christian. Tho "we live among falling institutions, tho the foundations of fabrics have long been giving way and a visible tottering has begun; tho the sound of great downfalls and great disruptions come from different quarters, yet the believer in Christ, with the Bible in his hand, remains unshaken." He knows that heaven and earth will pass away, but Christ's word will not pass away. States and empires will fall, but Christ remains forever. The Holy Ghost will abide for ever with His Church. The holy Scriptures will remain, the holy sacrament will remain, the creeds of the universal Church will remain, the Church herself will remain unto the end, to preach the word, to give the signal cry of danger, to minister the sacraments, to fight against error and sin, and to lead men to blessed immortality. Seek the Lord that ye may live.

We learn from this prophecy that security and vain confidence are the common faults of

man. He is blind to his danger. He reels around the abyss without perceiving it, and at last would plunge headlong, were it not that God startles him with judgments. But where is he to be found who thinks that the words of God are addrest to him personally! There is plenty of lip-service, but that of the heart is rare. In these days even religious zeal is not the criterion by which to judge the Christian character of men. It often happens that those who shamelessly transgress the simplest moral duties are most zealous in the outward observance of the duties of religion. True piety must show itself by hating evil and loving good. How often does prayer ascend to God on the Lord's day from one who practises fraud and pollutes his soul with sin in every transaction on the other six days. There are too many professed Christians who dishonor the name of Christ. They are almost Christians. The persons to whom Amos was sent were almost true followers of God, but not altogether. They still kept some idols in their groves. Take warning from the fate of the kingdom of Israel. Almost a Christian is not a Christian. Almost a Christian is like Micah, who thought he was in favor with the Lord because he had a priest abiding in his house. Almost a Christian is like Ananias who brought a part, but left part behind. He who gives almost, gives not, but denieth. He who believeth almost, believeth not, but doubt-

eth. Can the door which is but almost shut keep out the thief? Can the cup which is but almost whole hold water? The soldier who does but almost fight is a coward. The servant who does but almost labor is a loiterer.

O, ye who live in self-confidence and indifference, the prophet's message is for you! Wo unto you: he who is almost a Christian, almost zealous, almost a follower of Christ, who doth but almost believe, almost love—he shall be almost saved, but not altogether.

WILLETT

THE VALUE OF DISCONTENT

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THE VALUE OF DISCONTENT

PROF. HERBERT L. WILLETT, D.D.

"I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content."—Phil. 4 : 11.

"I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus."—Phil. 3 : 14.

THE classic statue of Apollo which has inspired lovers of art for many generations astonishes students of the human body with its apparent paradox of muscles belonging to wholly different and opposite activities in full tension at the same time. In this regard some others of the great masterpieces of sculpture and painting reveal an ideal rather than an actual human form. Flexor and extensor muscles are never in action simultaneously, and yet such is the fact which the great artists have portrayed in their highest conceptions of human beauty. A similar paradox is found in the study of the character of our Lord. Qualities that seem the most diverse and contradictory are discovered in full expression in His wonderful life. Students of psychology are accustomed to believe that one who is gifted with a high degree of intellectual power is not likely to be deeply sympathetic, and yet Jesus exhibits this para-

dox. Students of human nature affirm that the man who has a capacity for minute details is not likely to take the broadest views of life, and yet Jesus reveals both of these qualities in amazing perfection.

Numberless other paradoxes appear in the portrait which the gospels give us of our Lord. Nor is the apostle Paul wholly outside the expression of this law of paradox. The two texts which have been chosen for our meditation this morning are the proof of at least one of these remarkable contrarieties in his nature. In the one message Paul asserts that he has learned the secret of universal and absolute contentment. Nothing disturbs the calm serenity of his soul, centered in the work which the Master has given him to do. Yet in the other text, and that at the smallest remove from this statement of communion and quietude, he insists that not for one moment is he satisfied. He tries constantly to forget his surroundings and all the past, and to press forward to new and unreached levels of power and self-realization.

In this juxtaposition of two such opposite statements one discovers not a conflict but a larger harmony of interests. Paul was not trifling with his Philippian brethren when he wrote these two apparently opposite statements. They are complementary sides of the same law of human development; contentment with necessary surroundings coupled with in-

tense dissatisfaction with present attainments; the ability to adjust oneself to inevitable circumstances with a spirit of passionate protest against all things which may be changed for the better; contentment as the secret of inward communion and power, dissatisfaction as the keynote of growth and attainment.

Dissatisfaction is the earliest human emotion. The little child is a continuous demand. Request, importunity, insistence are the earliest occupations of mankind. Begging is a very old profession, for it begins immediately upon entrance into conscious existence. The little child is simply a bundle of wants. He has no power of self-satisfaction, but is dependent upon his environment for everything which ministers to life and welfare. And his demands are insistent and importunate.

It is true of every living creature. And as life matures these wants expand until the limit of nature, whatever it may be, is reached. In this fact lies the measure of every organism. The growth of wants is the measure of greatness. It is not size, physical power, swiftness, or the ability to meet the elemental forces of nature which determine the greatness of a living being. It is the capacity to want, the wise nature and variety of the needs of which the creature becomes conscious. The camel, the elephant, the ox, and the horse are bulky, strong, swift, and competent as living creatures to withstand forces which would

crush and destroy a human being. Yet how very simple are their wants! A little food, a little water, air, sleep, and a reasonable temperature, and they are not only able to live but live happily and usefully. On the physical side man has the same wants which they have, with the addition of clothing as a protection against the storms of winter and the heats of summer. In most respects man's physical wants are very simple and easily satisfied. A shelter, which is easily secured, sleep, which costs nothing, air, which belongs to all alike, water, and a little food—how inexpensive and easy to gain are all these necessaries of physical life! Yet they never measure the wants of mankind as they do those of his animal companions.

It is something else which gives dimensions to man's being. His eye, not so keen as theirs, yet sees a world of interests hidden from the brutes about him; his ear, not so sensitive to sounds as that of many of the beasts, yet hears what none of them has ever heard; his hand, the finest product of the evolutionary development of physical life, touches with sensitiveness and almost mental perception the forms and substances around him, and gives him an interpretation of untried facts which have no significance for the beasts. And his mind—that subtle, strange, differentiating organ of his being—what a world does it create and perceive—a world the dimmest per-

ception of which hardly dawns in the dull natures of his lower brothers of the brute world. But it is the capacity of the eye, the ear, the hand, the mind to demand, to ask, to beg, that makes man a being of promise. He has the capacity for almost infinite discontent, and, therefore, for achievement and power. At the lowest he is mere animal satisfied with the lowest comforts which nature abundantly supplies; at the highest, he is an insatiable searcher after all achievement, all possession, all good. And the higher he rises in the scale of human maturity the less possible is it for him to satisfy his craving. Bonaparte, setting his foot for the first time upon French soil from his little home in Corsica, awakened to a world of possibility unknown before. This world was enlarged for him during his experiences as a lieutenant of artillery at Toulon. It expanded still more in the days of his consulate, and when he led his armies across the Alps, it had reached horizons unknown to any man since Alexander died at Sidon or Cæsar fell at the base of Pompey's statue. Napoleon at the summit of his career was merely a bundle of unattained ambitions. And at that eminence from which he came toppling to his ruin he proved to his own and to the world's satisfaction that the mere accumulation of power never gives rest to the human spirit.

Bismarck is a higher example of human discontent. Burning to make his country the

leader in the politics of Europe and to humble her traditional foe, he worked incessantly with his great colleagues, Von Moltke and William I, until his dreams came true and France was humbled at his feet. Perhaps his was a nobler ambition than that of Napoleon, for it was selfishness tempered with patriotism. But Bismarck died with only a fragment of his hopes realized. Discontent, dissatisfaction, had been the measures of his greatness. A higher example still is that of Gladstone, the great English gentleman, the commoner who declined all preferment for himself but only wished great things for his country and for Christendom, a man who championed the cause of liberty and righteousness, pleading both for the opprest of his own people and those of other lands like Armenia and Russia, and who left office at the last rather than yield to England's policy of armament. Thus, again, dissatisfaction was the measure of a great soul and achievement was the dream which made him restless and eager for greater results.

Our own Lincoln is the fairest example in American history of the same great law. His youth was passed in penury; the simple human wants he knew as few men of his generation knew them. But these were the least of his concerns. Education, refinement, political influence, office, all these he craved with an insatiable avidity which asked not for personal preferment, save as a means of accomplishing

national good. It was the divine discontent of a great soul which wrought at last freedom for a race and a new destiny for the land he loved.

Unsatisfied desires are ever the driving power of human life. It is perhaps one of the most beneficent of laws that wants of the higher order cannot be wholly satisfied. Physical wants find ready satisfaction. But the larger one's capacity is for desiring and craving, the greater the difficulty of finding adequate resources for meeting them. Wanting is always a much more impressive a fact of life than possession. A man strives through years to accomplish a given goal, that of income, or learning, or office. But the attainment at last brings no compensating satisfaction. It is but a momentary good that he has attained. And this fact proves that the elemental values of wanting are far greater than those of attainment. It was a wise philosopher who said that if Providence should give him the choice between the possession of all truth and the joy of an eternal search after truth, he would choose the latter because only in seeking, wanting, desiring, lie the real satisfactions of human life.

It is in stimulating want that progress is made possible. The savage has few wants and therefore few chances for improvement. Give him a little clothing, a modicum of food which nature provides, and a sufficient tribal en-

nment to secure for him protection and simple companionships he craves, and all wants are met. The first task of the missionary and teacher is to arouse in such a being a new sense of discontent. The passion of unrest, of desire, of ambition, of yearning after better things must be the key that unlocks to him the door into the chambers of power and realization, of which there are so many in the house of God.

Nations grow to competence and maturity by recognition of their needs. No people who are satisfied can ever come to large estate. It was England's protest against the oppression of the feudal order that brought the birth of freedom, from the days of King John and the barons at Runnymede to the passage of the corn laws in the last generation. And it is the same sense of unsatisfied ideals which must lead England in our own day to a finer and fairer estimate of national greatness than her present effort at armament to meet the imaginary danger of German invasion. A nation grows great in proportion to its development of essential and important wants. It was the discontent of the French people growing through generations of servitude which voiced itself finally in the " Oath of the Tennis Court " and the great revolution. In that slow evolution of France under the guiding impulse of national need, the Reign of Terror, the Directory, Bonaparte, and the empire were

but passing episodes. Deeper and more elemental was the current which bore France onward to the modern age of liberty and progress.

In our own day we have seen Japan come to a marvelous self-realization under the spur of wants suddenly perceived and ideals grasped. Almost in a single day Japan has seemed to come from medieval to modern life. The question we are asking concerning Russia at the present moment is whether she is sufficiently discontented as yet with her condition to realize what liberty and progress mean. Protesting spirits she has, but are they sufficiently numerous to arouse her people to that sense of dissatisfaction which is the inevitable ground of all progress? Perhaps Russia must wait for more genuine awakening of discontent among her millions before she can realize the hopes of her most ardent admirers in our generation.

Man is measured by his wants. The kind of wants he has will be the indication of the level to which he has arisen. Are they merely food and shelter, physical satisfaction, houses, lands, incomes, automobiles, yachts, and the like? These things the world has found fairly easy of attainment but quite useless as satisfactions of the spirit. An English essayist recalls the story of Dr. Johnson's visit with his friend Boswell to Lord Scarsdale's beautiful castle at Keddleston. "Must not this man be

happy? " said Boswell to his friend. " Nay," said the philosopher, " for all his wealth excludes but one evil, poverty."

A recent writer on social conditions in America has asserted that " Modern Americans are the most unhappy people that have ever lived on the face of the earth, because they are the most prosperous people." Certainly wide margins of material prosperity do not satisfy human life. The man who dreams of an income of a thousand dollars as the most that he would ever wish, attains it only to discover that nothing less than two or three thousand can meet his needs. With the growth of his wants, which keep ever in advance of his resources, he finds with an income of half a million that he is only decently poor, and trembles always on the edge of that abyss in which he fancies the unresourceful must ever remain.

On a higher level is the human desire for the good will of others, for praise, commendation, admiration. This is a genuine and normal craving. No man can be indifferent to the opinion of his fellow men. Yet how easy this craving may become the ground of the keenest unhappiness. The loss of the little praise reacts in the most agonizing depression. Haman, the courtier of Artaxerxes, had place, power, wealth, and a brilliant future. One thing only he lacked—the homage of one poor Jew who sat in the king's gate. That lack

cast a gloom over all his good fortunes and ruined his life.

A still higher need of the human mind is knowledge. All the world is open in our day to exploration, and the variety of literature which comes to the hand of every eager reader is sufficient to give him touch with all life. Culture is the gift of our educational system, the attainment of knowledge coupled with the discipline of spirit which is always the ground of sanity and awareness. Every citizen has the right to education both for himself and for his children. Yet culture is never an end in itself. The dreariest pessimists of our age are people who have culture but no balancing interests in life. Their wants have only partially been realized. Their dissatisfactions grow out of the uselessness of their lives and the futility of the kind of efforts they are willing to make.

Higher still is the love of beauty, the appreciation of the grandeur of the world, the love of art, and a certain sympathy with human efforts to create beauty. Such wants of the human spirit are satisfied by nature herself in her wonderful displays of loveliness, and by those studies in the realm of art which bring happiness to cultured minds. Yet mere love of beauty is never a final good. Nothing is likely to be more disquieting than the possession of what is known as "the artistic temperament," unregulated by noble ambitions to

turn the love of beauty into the service of mankind. The artist may only attain that level of culture which brings him irritation and makes him an irritant, unless he is sobered and restrained by the fine responsibilities which belong to his life. From those to whom much has been given much is inevitably required.

But higher still is the craving for goodness, for honor, for truth, for character, for "manners, virtues, freedom, power," which Wordsworth asserted were the high and fine qualities of Milton's nature. These are the genuine needs of every human life, and they are easier of attainment because they are the gifts which Providence most generously helps us to acquire. Such attainments of altruism, brotherliness, sympathy as made the life of Christ the miracle of his day may make the lives of men in our modern time the normal and regular expressions of the life of God, under that high discipline which the Christian faith has brought to our generation.

Highest of all these needs of man is the craving for God, the quest after unseen realities, the consciousness that we have to do with One who is higher than the highest, and that in His life we find ourselves made perfect. "Ye are complete in him." It is a fact that the higher one goes in the scale of needs the more certain is their satisfaction and the more abundant the means by which they are to be

met. This may appear to contradict what was said before, yet it holds true. On the low plane of mere satisfaction the simplest wants are easily satisfied, and the higher one rises the more exacting and imperious become the wants, yet it is equally true that for the nobler desires the satisfactions are more ample and attainable. We cannot always be sure of physical comfort. There are times when suffering must come. We are not always sure of human approval. Our pride and self-esteem may often be grievously injured. We cannot attain our utmost desires for intellectual improvement. There are limitations on these lower needs which lie in the nature of the case. But to the answer that comes to our craving for nobleness, goodness, honor, and truth, for the social virtues and the domestic sanctities, for human welfare and the brotherly spirit, and most of all for the sense of God and the knowledge of holiest things, there are no limits and no barriers. No guardian angel stands to keep the way of the true life; no rocky shores cast back at the sea of our longings the baffling words, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther." The words of Jesus are our inspiration and confidence. "Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled." The lower hungers may have to go unsatisfied or met only in part. These higher passions, cravings, wants of the spirit, are sure to be satisfied.

Let us close then with the paradox we met at the beginning. Paul was always contented. He never chafed against the circumstances of his life. Poverty, reproach, persecution were alike incapable of disturbing the calm serenity of a nature that went down to greater depths and ascended to greater heights than could be jostled by passing mischance. So may our lives be calm and serene. It is within our power to guard ourselves from petty annoyance by occupation with larger ideas. Like the apostle, we may learn by resolute discipline of the spirit to say, "I have learned in whatsoever state I am therewith to be content." But at the same time we must share Paul's great secret of divine dissatisfaction with all that was imperfect in himself and could be changed for the better in the age of which he was a part. He pressed on to the nobler things. He spared no effort in making the world understand that new life which Jesus had brought to humanity. God was speaking in that life in new and more impressive terms. Paul omitted no opportunity to make men understand the message. Divine unrest made him eager, alert, ambitious all his life long, and thus he was supremely effective in the transformation of that Roman world from selfishness, brutality, and godlessness to the larger sympathies, the kindlier spirit, and the sense of divine things with which the Christian faith has increasingly

filled the world. May ours be a spirit of calm content in all the daily tasks of our lives, and at the same time the spirit of divine unrest until our lives are molded after the life of Christ and our efforts have become effective for the coming of that kingdom of God for which we ever pray.

WOOD

HUMAN SUFFERING

CHARLES TRAVERS WOOD

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HUMAN SUFFERING

THE REV. C. T. WOOD

" For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the Spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father.
The Spirit itself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:
And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with him, that we may be also glorified together.
For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.
For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.
For the creature was made subject to vanity, not willingly, but by reason of him who hath subjected the same in hope;
Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.
For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now.
And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves, groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body.
For we are saved by hope; but hope that is seen is not hope; for what a man seeth, why doth he yet hope for?
But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it.
Likewise the Spirit also helpeth our infirmities: for we know not what we should pray for as we ought:

but the Spirit itself maketh intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.
And he that searcheth the hearts knoweth what is the mind of the Spirit, because he maketh intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God."—Romans 8 : 15-28.

It is a law of all love, divine and human, that he who has the highest privilege in life—that of loving another genuinely—must suffer in the sorrows and for the failures of his beloved, even as he also rejoices in his joys. From age to age, since man first sinned or suffered, the divine Father has borne the burden of this pain in His all-pure spirit. That is the meaning of the cross of Christ. It shows us something of the dark horror of all sin, which brings pain and anguish to the great Father of all, and so stirs us out of our dull indifference and apathy and transforms all our judgments about human life. "Blesséd are the poor—blesséd are they that mourn—blesséd are they who are persecuted for righteousness' sake." What a strange gospel, but it is God's! We in our blindness want selfish pleasure and self-gratification and happy ease. And the message of Christ not only startles us; it almost repels at first sight. For He says to us: "The way of God, which alone endureth forever, is the way of the cross. All else is vanity of vanities; disillusionment, satiety. The sweetness of selfishness turns

bitter in the mouth—the peace of the cross alone endures. And the cross brings pain and suffering: they are the only way to heaven."

This problem is as old as the world. The Jews always regarded suffering as a sign of God's curse on him who suffered. But one at least of their prophets clearly saw the truth that suffering is a blessing in disguise. He—the unknown prophet whose sermons are bound up in our Bibles with those of Isaiah, forming the last twenty-six chapters of the book of Isaiah—was a captive in Babylon during the captivity. Hard was the lot of the faithful Jew, a stranger, despised and downtrodden in a foreign land. Most of his countrymen had fallen away from Judaism, and given up their religion: and lo! they prospered and grew into honor and riches. And he, this unknown prophet, with a small, faithful remnant of the Jews, was reviled by these perverts. They were rich and prosperous, he was poor and downtrodden. They, to all seeming, were never troubled about their faithlessness to God; they were indifferent to religion and to honesty alike—and they prospered! Was he, then, deserted by the Almighty, and they blest and in favor with Him? God forbid! So there dawned on the darkness of that lonely soul the greatest revelation in the Old Testament—the truth that he who loves most, must suffer most; that the more Godlike a man is, the more will he be

tortured by the sin of the world! that to suffer thus is God's own life, and blessèd is His servant who can share that privilege. "Who hath believed our report?" he cries. The servant "is despised and rejected of men: a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief . . . he was despised and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we (in our blindness) did esteem him stricken, smitten of God and afflicted. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities. All we like sheep have gone astray . . . and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppresst and afflicted . . . it pleased the Lord to bruise him: he hath put him to grief." But "he shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many." This is the picture—this the portion—of all God's best servants. It came to him in Babylon long ago; it came to the apostles: it comes to God's prophets to-day. It came in fulness to His greatest servant—His sinless Son. Do we pity Christ only? Do we pity all His followers who have borne the cross? They are the only blessèd ones; there is no peace, no joy, no fulness of life, except in the cross. There is no alternative—either we fall back to the animals and stagnate in a dreary, sickly, deadly sloth—even if indeed we are not bound slaves in the cruel

clutch of open vice; or if we want freedom, want life, fuller life, God's life, there is no way but the way of the cross.

> "Then welcome each rebuff,
> That turns earth's smoothness rough,
> And bids nor stand or sit, but go."

Does not this change all our views of life? Surely, and this life is very full of sorrow, of suffering and pain, of disease and crushing poverty, and, worst of all, of sin and degradation. There is so much suffering if we take life in the lump and not piecemeal, that without the cross of Christ, a man who thinks, might well be crusht by the load. This is surely true, even tho we believe that the joys of life vastly outnumber and outweigh its sorrows and suffering. But the cross of Christ transforms suffering. It assures us that not one ache or sorrow is ever wasted or useless; but that in the wisdom of God, which we cannot fathom, it is working out the redemption of the world; is drawing man up to glories beyond and ever beyond; to heights scarcely dreamed of. Paul believed it at least; he says so in this glorious eighth chapter of Romans. "Ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba Father. We are children of God and joint heirs with Christ—if so be that [we claim our heritage and], suffer with him that we may be also

glorified together with him. For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us." There is pain in creation, in the animals, but a pain which waits in hope, because it shall accomplish the manifestation of the sons of God (v. 21-22). Does not this receive a wonderful illustration in the Darwinian theory of evolution—the survival of the fittest? And the race of men is subject to this suffering, only that it may work out a glorious redemption (v. 23). Nay, he says, God's holy Spirit makes our struggles and our toils His own, suffering with us (v. 25). And what is the conclusion of it all? "We know that all things work together for good to them that love God"—only to them. He does not say "all things are good." Christianity is no idle optimism. The absolute optimist is one who is in comfort himself and indifferent to others; and so he closes his eyes and says "All's well with the world." Pessimism, which is the foible of our tired age, is the hopelessness which sees no break in the clouds. But Christianity says: Earth is dark—very dark, with sin and degradation, and the lives of many are shadowed by suffering; but the sun of the morning is behind the clouds and will scatter them with his pure, warm rays. Face the worst that earth can offer, its weariness and sin and despair; bear them as Christ bore them; transfigure the

crown of thorns into a crown of glory; "all things work together for good to them that love God." A recent writer has said that the existence of a single toothache is enough to make us question the goodness of God. Do you believe that? Surely the whole scheme of life gives the lie to such a statement.

Let us look at it in this way. God's life, as revealed by our Lord, is a life of utter and entire self-sacrifice. From all eternity the Father has poured Himself into the Son and Holy Spirit; and the heaven, which we are promised in the Bible, is just the opposite of a Mohammedan paradise of selfish enjoyment; just the life of self-sacrifice, which alone can, in time or eternity, give perfect and abiding happiness. Into such a life comes the fact of man's sin, foreseen, we must believe, by God. It at once makes God's life a life of pain, we must believe; but all the time, under the pain —we cannot understand how—abides the peace of God, which self-sacrifice always brings even to us. Man's life, if he had not sinned, would probably have been so adjusted as to be one of perfect peace and joy, in perpetual self-sacrifice, and of painless development and growth. But his sin changes the scheme of life; and makes pain and suffering a necessary factor, if he is to grow and develop at all. Pain and suffering in themselves never are or can be anything but hideously evil; if they fail in their purpose, they

are horrible. But consider their end—the redemption of mankind, and they are transformed into blessings of Almighty God. The surgeon who would amputate a man's leg uselessly, would be a cruel monster; but when he does it to save life, his action is beneficent and good. In an address by Sir Frederick Treves some months ago, he pointed out that the existence of pain in disease was entirely beneficent and made for the perfection of life. As in the physical, so in the moral world. And if we only had faith in our God and His Christ, we might learn to welcome all pain or trial that His love sends us, because we should believe that it all made for the life and redemption of the world. To read of the stake and the torture which brought death to many an early Christian, makes us shudder and yet many a martyr—aged men, delicate women, and young children, met them without flinching, exulting in the crown of martyrdom. We of to-day are asked to do a thing for Christ, which is every bit as difficult as that which they did, namely, to take to ourselves all the suffering which men have to bear, and make it our own in sympathy; year after year to face life's ugliest sins without running away and yet with all God's loathing for them. Do you shrink from it? Do you think it is too heavy to be borne? He says: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light." It is a paradox, but one that runs through all life; for after all

does not any man in vigor and strength like best just those things which do cost effort and toil? How otherwise shall we explain our love of athletic sports or of mountaineering? Why is the man infinitely happier who is toiling from morn to night and denying himself all sorts of little comforts to keep his wife and family, than the rich man in his palace, stagnating in luxury and selfishness, bored beyond measure by the weariness and satiety of life?

We think we might welcome any effort or pain which would help in the redemption of the world, as Christ's suffering did. We do, in a humble, simple way try to bear our own trials in a Christian spirit, and to let them draw us closer to Him. We do try to share the burden of the afflicted and to make them sharers of our own happy life. We do pray to God to make us loathe the sin of the world, instead of being indifferent to it or even a participator in it. But we are puzzled and weighed down by the sight of misery which seems dreary, hopeless, useless. Yes, surely this is a great mystery which we must face. Why does the moth so uselessly burn itself in the candle flame? Why does the cat so wantonly torture its victim? Why do men lie in hospitals in mortal pain praying for death day after day for long years together? Why does the hand of death cut down our nearest and dearest? Why does grief, instead of

drawing men to Christ, so often crush them? Why is a human sin allowed to wreak itself on so many innocent victims? We cannot forget that there are people living on the verge of starvation in this rich country—many of them living dreary lives of sin, of monotonous and hopeless struggle. We cannot forget that the innocent child suffers all its life long for the sins of a drunken or vicious father. No, we need our faith here, more than anywhere in life. We shrink appalled at the terrible consequences of sin; the drunkard perhaps would give his life to undo the consequences of his sin, but it is too late; his child must bear the penalty to the grave. But for father and child, and for us who watch them, there is hope when we look to the cross of Christ. No pain of His was in vain, and we trust that every sorrow, which man bears somehow in God's loving purpose, draws the world nearer Him. We learn at Calvary that

"God nothing does or suffers to be done
But thou wouldst do thyself, couldst thou but see
The end of all events as well as He."

All things work together for good to those that love Him; even the sin of the world may be turned to good.

Here then is the message of Calvary. First and foremost it says that God's life is one of utter self-sacrifice and man can never rise to the glory of manhood, unless he rises to

self-sacrifice. This is the way of Christ, the way of the cross. Let us thank God utterly and sincerely for the blessings which He has showered on us so richly—of His love He gave them to us; with love let us receive them. But remember, these blessings can never mean much to us, if we keep them to ourselves. We must go close to the world and share our happiness with men, and make their sorrows our own, and learn to suffer for their sins, or in Paul's words, " make up in our bodies what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ." The love of God is a wondrous thing, but it is not found in sentimental ecstasies. It is found only in following Christ, in toiling to teach men of Him, in learning to love men and work for them, to pray for them, and so to make their lives happier and more God-like. Let us count the cost; it does involve the cross. It means many a sharp conflict with self, many an anxious struggle in prayer for those who are wandering from their God. If we are not feeling this, if our religion is not making anyone else better and is entirely selfish, it is not Christ's religion.

Jesus Christ never comes so near us as in the darkness. Have faith in Him; be sure that He is working for the best, sure that the more we suffer the closer we are to the great suffering heart of God. The time will come when we shall see, as now in faith we trust, that every pain we have borne was working

out the redemption of the race; when we shall smile at the remembrance of all our trouble, as we now smile at the griefs which seemed so big to us in childhood. The cross of Christ seems terrible, viewed from afar, but to those who bear it, it brings joy and peace and love even here—and beyond Gethsemane and Calvary lies the home, where our Father shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and sorrow and sighing be no more.

WORTMAN

ON DISCERNING GEMS

DENIS WORTMAN

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ON DISCERNING GEMS

DENIS WORTMAN, D.D., L.H.D.

"Senses exercised to discern both good and evil."—Heb. 5 : 14.

WHEN the Rev. Dr. Guido Verbeck was visiting my home along the Hudson some years ago, among the many delightful things he told us as to the delicacy of thought of the Japanese mind and the fine things in its literature, was this quotation from an ancient poem in that tongue:

"There are men, who, walking along the common highway, will pick up a stone, split it, and take a gem out of it; this is because they know gems. There are men, who enter the very mountains of wealth and come out empty-handed; this is because they do not know gems."

How do men know? Often in some strangely occult way. It is not by memory alone, nor by demonstration, nor by some master's will alone, nor by the mere intellect alone. We know in many different ways. But that only is a true knowledge when we come into some moral sympathy and touch with what we know. It is by a blending of perception and affection. Jesus told the Jews

they did not know God. What, did they not? Could they not tell His name, give His attributes, recite His commandments through Moses, His promises and denunciations through the prophets? Were they not orthodox? Yes, and yet most of them did not know God. Some men to large degree know God who do not at all think about Him as you and I do. Some love Jesus who cannot at all categorically define Him even to themselves. It is largely through the affections we understand. Men may know much about God, but not know Him. There is an innate something that discerns spiritual qualities and moral essences and instinctively discriminates the wrong from the right. It is God in the soul recognizing God.

The natural, carnal man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness unto him; neither can he know them, for they are spiritually discerned. The apostle had to omit writing some precious truths he desired to the Corinthians because they were carnal and not spiritual. In the same way our blessèd Lord had many things to tell His own, "but ye cannot bear them now."

Hence the great lessons of which the New Testament is full. You must be spiritual to know spiritual truths. You must be to some measure godly to know God; truly Christlike to some extent to know Christ. You may know quite a good deal about God, but you

cannot really know Him except through a live spiritual nature.

"There be who along the common highway will pick up a stone, split it, and take a gem out of it; this is because they know gems. There be who enter the very mountains of wealth and come out empty-handed; this is because they do not know gems."

Now this fine spiritual knowledge, this keen, instant, appreciative and instinctive discernment of true gems that reflect and refract the very light of God Himself, this fine sense of what is pure, lovely, divine, is surely worthy our esteem and our utmost cultivation. It is a sign of God in us. It signifies us as more than mere lobes of flesh. It identifies us with the immortals. It marks us as sons of God.

It is an infinite pity that so few have it, that only so few who have it educate it, that so many to whom it belongs, in some part, so recklessly destroy it. I say naught against the ordinary crafts. They are useful, noble and honorable and men must engage in them. But after all it is a dreadful thing for a man who out of fine marble can make statues of men, angels and gods, to confine his work to laying walls. And a hard thing it would be for one who by genius, by learning, by deep inspirations of the Spirit, might make plain the way of the Lord, and gladden the feet of them who should walk therein, merely to be a breaker of stone along the dusty roads!

I mean that spiritual capabilities are so fine and admirable that they should be put to spiritual uses. I mean that those who have spiritual discernment should use that kind of eyes; and those who have spiritual natures should understand themselves, and not make themselves anywhat inferior. Sons of God should be above being affected by the praise or blame of sons of men. Princely blood should manifest princely spirit and aim. Heirs of glory should not set too much stock by earthly treasure. Men who may become greater than angels should not consent to ally themselves to brutes.

We all may be away and afar above what most of us make ourselves. We blush at doing noble things. We hesitate before unusual careers. We shrink from a glorious immortality. We deem it to be more manly to be weak and carnal and false, than like Jesus of Nazareth.

As to spiritual understanding, how poorly off we be; eyes, seeing not; ears, hearing not; alas this is bad for our souls! Spiritual knowledge we all should have. It is as imperatively necessary for us children of God, bound for the skies, real dwellers in the spiritual realm, as it is needful for a botanist to know flowers, an astronomer to study the stars, a chemist to investigate the properties of matter, a statesman to know history, a traveler to understand geography. We do

not fit into our true nature and true life and use, unless more than aught else we cultivate our taste for eternal realities.

Suppose we turn to Plato and catch such words as these: "Wisdom is the chief and leader of the divine class of goods. Knowledge is the food of the soul. The knowledge which has to do with being and reality and sameness and unchangeableness" (that is—God) "is by far the truest of all. Truth is the beginning of every good thing both in heaven and on earth; and he who would be blessed and happy should be from the first a partaker of the truth."

If Plato, a heathen (and by all odds give me a Christian pagan rather than a pagan Christian) could say such a thing as this, we must not be surprised that one who once lay on the bosom of Jesus and caught his very heart could say, "Everyone that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. God is love, and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. This is the true God and eternal life."

All which again recalls the saying of the old poet of Japan, "There be who along the highway will pick up a stone, split it and take a gem out of it; this is because they know gems. There be who enter the very mountains of wealth and come out empty-handed; this is because they do not know gems."

In other words and to sum up in brief what has been already said, there is a delicate, refined, and spiritual sense which is appreciative of spiritual truths and ethical distinctions. The way to know God is to love and obey Him. "He that doeth his will shall know of the doctrine." Men who stand aloof from a holy life are not capable of discussing wisely about God or heaven or redemption. Let them submit their spirit to His Spirit, and then He shall reveal Himself. We must let the divine Master rule our thought; we must let Him renew our very nature; then come the visions of God and then the audible words of truth. The spiritually minded skeptic shall know more of God than the carnal believer about Him. The untaught savage, who has received to his heart the simple story of the cross, knows Jesus better than any of us who have been told the whole story over and over again, but have not yielded to the divine persuasions.

When I say that the lover of gems, one who is captivated by their intrinsic beauty, shall naturally know gems easily, I mean that he who loves those richest of all gems, truth, love, piety, goodness, God, shall be by all odds the wisest and safest judge as to which are true and which false, which beautiful and which common, which are to be desired and which are unworthy and the rather are to be cast away.

On this account, O friends, I would have you not so much seek after outside truths as inner truthfulness; the regeneration of your natures. If you would see, put your spiritual glasses on. Wander not up and down the great highways of theological debate. No, ask God to give you a thoroughly spiritual nature, to renew your soul and make you receptive of His Spirit. By His help, cultivate this inner life of yours; educate it into sweetness, and joy and patience and hope and faith and forgiveness and love! Then you shall have vision, and the holy visions see.

This shall be as though a cataract were removed from sightless eyeballs. This shall be the answer to David's saintliest prayer: Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence, and take not thy holy Spirit from me! Then will I so far know the truth and thee, that I may teach even transgressors thy ways and sinners shall be converted unto thee. There be, who enter the very mountains of wealth and come out empty-handed, but you shall be as they who along the common road shall pick up a stone, split it and find a gem in it, because you know gems.

From all this flow naturally a few practical reflections:

How great the folly of other knowledges if we have not the knowledge of God; this be-

cause He is the highest possible object of thought. If the creation shall invite our study, and entrance us with its glory and use, how much more shall He who made it. Put all the worlds together, they be but finite, a million million worlds, they be but finite, whereas one God is infinite alone by Himself; infinitely greater than they all. Therefore as Tillotson once rightly said, "Whatsoever other knowledge a man may be endued withal, he is but an ignorant person who doth not know God, the Author of his being."

When St. Columban said to Lucinus concerning his ardent devotion to learning, "My child, many out of undue learning have shipwrecked their souls," "my father," replied the boy with deep humility, "If I learn to know God I shall never offend Him, for they only offend Him who know Him not."

How great the folly of those who seek not the knowledge of Him and of His ways! They close their eyes to the grandest visions, their ears to the noblest songs, their minds to the highest truths, their hearts to the purest inspirations. They load themselves with useless pyrites instead of gold, with imperfect knowledges that impede their way to better, with low affections that spoil the highest! They deny themselves the joy of a Father's love, the blessings of a Savior's redemption, the benefits of the highest wisdom, the attainment of any high ideal, the promise of an

heavenly inheritance. Talk of self-denial of Christ's followers. The greatest real self-deniers in all the world are those who deny themselves the pardon of God and the grace of Christ.

How strange the folly of infidels and gross sinners, who because they do not see God, or absolutely convincing reasons for His existence, say there is no God! How can they see Him if they have not spiritual vision? How can they hear Him if they have not the obedient, sympathetic, spiritual ear?

Did you ever hear that beautiful story of St. Augustine? He relates of a certain Gentile, who showed him his idol gods, saying, "Here is my God; where is thine?" Then, pointing up at the sun, he said, "Lo! here is my God; where is thine?" So, showing him divers creatures as his God, he still upbraided him with, "Here are my Gods, where are thine?" But St. Augustine answered him not, and explains, "I showed him not my God, not because I had not one to show him, but because he had not eyes to see Him."

A gross and sinful soul can no more understand God, than a brute animal can comprehend English grammar or the Hebrew paradigms. Unrighteousness, lust, carnality, earthliness, selfishness, can no more know God, than our eyes can see sounds, or our ears hear visions, or our hands take hold of a spirit. Stop cherishing the unbelieving and God-

hating mood! Stop yielding to the lusts of the flesh! Yield to all you think the right, and all the true and all the God you know, then further revelations shall undoubtedly be made to you. Then shall you take up a stone, split it and find a gem in it; while others shall enter the very mountains of wealth and come out empty handed; for they do not know gems!

And, so, beloved, what remains for us to do? Truly, there be too many gems along the common highways of life for us to have neglect of them. Let us be good mineralogists, and by whatever road we walk, whatever caverns of darkness we explore, whatever mines we enter where the great toilers are, we shall have a certain inkling of what a stone contains from a mere glance at its general form and look; and shall pick out some rich gem or other mineral which the mob of workmen have thrown carelessly away. You well know how some people have a certain knack at discovering things they like, a certain genius at sight. One will find a score of four-leaf clovers where you will vainly search for a single favor. One will detect bits of landscape beauty, glimpses of quiet sweetness, or hints of great and overcoming glory, while you ride carelessly along, tapping your horse. One will see fossils in the stone wall, crystals in the quarry, that you have passed a hundred times in ignorance.

Truth is, my friends, there are precious ores of silver and gold, and beautiful gems all along the way of human life, and we ride by them, and we stumble over them, and do not know the gems. Who would think in that round rough nodule so like a cobblestone there be the beauties of a sunset? Who would think that under those gray coverings of stone was concealed the opal's changeful brightness? Ay, who would say this leaden ore had silver, this dark flint gold, this hard stone the flashing gem that lovers covet for fairest bride and empresses sigh for to deck their diamond coronets? Ay, truly then there be precious ores and gems along the daily walk of life, if only we knew gems!

Oh, if we only knew the gems! If we only knew the gems! If we loved them so, we would take the interest in them we should and find out the gems they really are!

But I was saying we meet unawares with many gems. There is the rough gem of affliction. Who would think so much blessedness to reside in a great sorrow? so much kindliness in the rod, so much sweetness in the chalice of bitterness? so much gain in overwhelming loss? so much fatherliness in so severe chastening, so delectable peace procurable from so much tumult? Who so much praise out of such crying, such presence of God from absence of human help, heaven so dearer after earthly separations, so much love

in all that is so terrible and threatening? Still, some do know gems. He did, I imagine, who could write, and he does who can now sing that wonderful hymn:

"Deep in unfathomable mines
Of never failing skill,
He treasures up his bright designs,
And works his gracious will.
Judge not the Lord by feeble sense,
But trust Him for his grace;
Behind a frowning Providence
He hides a smiling face!"

The bitter bud produces a fragrant flower, and dreaded clouds are big with bliss, and shall break, in mercy on your heads.

Learn, O friends, to know gems! Under rough exteriors of men, let us often distinguish choice characters. It is a pain to think how men and women are misunderstood and misunderstand each other. You despise a certain ignoramus, yet he may be less of a fool than you and I. Your neighbor's house is not half so fine as yours, but then, his happy family! Here is a wretched specimen, uncouth, hardfisted, penurious; but he may be more honest than many of us soft fingered ones, more of a downright, upright man. I may be in the country and along some lonely road I drive, and the night crowding on; and however rough a man I meet may look, if I see him with an ax over his shoulder and a pail in his hand, I know he has been out at

his day's labor, and has probably worked hard, and therefore is honest, and I shall not fear to ask him up beside me for a resting ride through the coming wood and dark. No robber has hard-kunckled labor's hands!

You do a capital work if you know gems, and find out a widow's honest family in need, a hard-toiling laborer simply unfortunate. And if you can find a poor young lad or girl of merit and give to such a home and education to fit such an one for Christly service in the world, how grateful should you be! Try to find gems; gems among the poor, gems among the lowly and unfortunate, gems among the sick, gems among the young; perhaps bright, consecrated young men you may help educate for a blessed ministry of Christ! Yea, gems among your enemies, so you may learn to admire and love and bless them. It is all also an education of yourself.

Among the aged, the decrepit, the neglected, let us see whether there be not gems. What if such very jewels be in all the drift and castaways of life? What if such jewels be among the grand old men who years ago had churches, listening congregations, converts by the score, men who chose for their fields Sunday-schools and chapels and small churches down-town or in the outskirts of the cities, or on the Western prairies, and now are hapless, hopeless in their poverty—save as by the grace of God. What if there be men who

planted young churches to grow to strong ones, men who for love of Christ would not accept large and established churches, but worked and spent their lives among new, poor, struggling people; ministers who remain in old age, and poor, and want work but cannot get work, and are dying for your love and help! If mayhap you find some faithful servant of the Lord by age or infirmities laid aside from duty he would gladly do, what better than soothe his heart, build up his life, and cheer his home, by some generous beneficence; the home of the old minister who on some meager support, one-third what he might have had in other callings, has yet given all his years to the upbuilding and comfort of the churches! If a greatly suffering cause be a grandly deserving one, what call here upon our noblest helpfulness!

Hosts of instances there be in which the righteous suffer, the good are reputed infamous, the truth is feared as a scorpion, principles underlying the very government of God are disesteemed, the best methods of promoting human welfare are scorned and maligned, arsenals of heaven misconceived to be the very engineering of hell—let us know gems.

I was thinking of Him who bare our sins and carried our sorrows, but we esteemed Him not! I was thinking how many do not recognize Jesus as their helper and Savior. Oh, lonely Redeemer! Forgive us that we do not

find thee out! Forgive us that we be so blind to our own needs, so blind to thy virtues! Forgive us that we be so low and depraved in our tastes, so slow of appreciation of thy virtues, so reluctant to accept thine aid!

Beloved, no more such miserable blunders on the part of any of us. Let us, by God's grace, and with intensive interest, cultivate our natures to the discernment of that which is beautiful, pure, holy, divine. Let us know God! Let us understand ourselves, our weaknesses and sins, and the great Christ's redeeming grace. Let us bear in mind what even the Oriental poet tells us; that there be who walk along the common highway, pick up a stone and find a gem in it, because they know gems; and there be who enter the mountains of wealth and come out empty handed, because they do not know gems.

As we walk the long and dusty road of life, wearied it may be, and even faint, yet let us well watch whether we may not find some treasures along the way, gems of divine blessing for our cheer, stones of rough trouble that may be smoothed and polished into glistening gems; gems of a forlorn humanity that may be worked into brilliants for the crown of Christ, gems of sweet and holy truths; and above all that One gem that is more brilliant than the stars and strong outshines the sun, that supreme Light of all worlds, whose radiance, striking full on any human heart, con-

verts it into a jewel fair, to shine in the very coronet of God! Yes, let us love gems, and thus know genuine gems, and thus by the very chemistry and art of grace be ourselves converted into gems, for the surpassing crown of the Lord Jesus Christ!

WRIGHT

PROVIDENCE AND DUTY

GEORGE FREDERICK WRIGHT

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PROVIDENCE AND DUTY

GEORGE FREDERICK WRIGHT, D.D., LL.D.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of them is forgotten before God?
"But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not, therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows."—Luke 12 : 6, 7.

To one who has only a superficial knowledge of the world, equality before the law seems an empty phrase. At first sight the reign of law seems inconsistent with the highest welfare of all the individuals who are the subjects of its sway. In countless instances it would seem that the welfare of the individual is sacrificed to the welfare of the mass. Inequality, rather than equality, seems to be the rule in the administration of all the world's affairs. Human society is divided into two classes—the apparently fortunate, and the apparently unfortunate. Some are born rich, and some are born poor; some have a heritage of great physical strength and mental power, while others are doomed to lifelong weakness of body and feebleness of intellect. The lot of some falls in the lap of luxury and of the bountiful supplies of nature; while that of others falls amid barren wastes and in

overcrowded areas of population, where hunger and want are the lot of all. The fertile prairies of the West and the rich soil of the river valleys are not large enough to go around and supply a farm to every needy family. In the cities, corner lots are not sufficiently numerous to enrich the whole population. The fertile portions of the earth rapidly fill with population, compelling the overflow to spread out into the mountainous wastes or into the malarial regions of the tropics, or even to the very outskirts of the earth around the arctic border. In short, look whatever way we will upon human society, the distribution of advantages seems anything but equal.

In justifying the ways of God, this seeming inequality of human conditions is often attributed wholly to human sin. Man's inhumanity to man is sometimes spoken of as the only thing which makes countless thousands mourn; and thus an attempt is made to shove all the responsibility upon man's free-will which thwarts the divine plan. But, upon closer inspection, this is found to be impossible, and the mystery returns with even greater force.

Nature herself is the most implacable foe to the perfection of human plans. The seasons are not wholly uniform: the drought of summer and the cold of winter are sure to disturb the best-laid plans of man. The tornado, the

earthquake, the pestilence that walketh in darkness, come at unexpected times to lay their ruthless hands upon the fairest plans of the wise and prudent. Science has indeed greatly enlarged our control of nature, but has by no means made it complete. *La grippe* has sapped the strength of tens of thousands in the most highly civilized centers of Europe and America, as well as devastated mission stations in far-off Alaska. Diphtheria and scarlet fever spread terror everywhere, notwithstanding the efforts of the medical colleges and their highly trained graduates. In fact, the benedictions of science, like those of the Savior, reach only a few of the sick, and restore only a few of the lame and halt and blind. The reign of death, even in the case of Lazarus, and of the widow's son, was stayed only for a season, and at last they too went the way of all the earth. It is the universal law that dust must return to dust, that all men must die. The individual is but a puff of vapor attached to a passing cloud, the whole appearance of which rapidly passes away.

Such being the relation of the individual to the whole, it seems impossible that his interests should not often, and indeed always, be sacrificed for the perfection of the mass. In view of this, it is difficult to see how such promises as are made in the Bible can be fulfilled. It would seem impossible to prevent

the individual who has fallen between the upper and the nether millstones from being ground to powder.

Yet what is impossible to man is possible with God, and we are bound to believe that infinite power and wisdom are able to solve the problem, and to make all things work together for good to them that love God. For, God is able to bring light out of darkness, joy out of sorrow, patience out of tribulation, and every highest human good out of the most unfavorable conditions of life. Notwithstanding the failure of so many of His plans, the keynote of the great apostle to the Gentiles was one of rejoicing. "Rejoice, and again I say unto you, rejoice." Thus, to all, the gospel is designed to be preeminently a system of hope, as over against the despair of all heathen philosophies.

This joyful strain of Christian hope is based upon two all-important truths concerning the human soul. In the first place, it assumes that man is very high in the scale of being; and, in the second place, that he is entrusted with the great responsibility of determining his own character, and of securing the blessings of existence by rightly adjusting himself to the conditions of life in which an all-wise Creator has placed him.

It is a comparatively easy matter for the Creator to look after the interests of a sparrow; for the sparrow's wants are few: he has

no care for the future, and probably no foreboding of the future, and no moral character to preserve or pervert. The short life which he lives is a good in itself, independent of all relations to the future. His nature is built on no large foundations pointing onwards and upwards, and his death is no interruption of an imperfectly developed plan. But with man it is different. He has large hopes; he has boundless expectations; the future is to him more than the present or the past.

The greatness of man's being is revealed incidentally in the care which God has taken to secure its development and welfare. If it be true that he careth for the sparrows, it is preeminently true that he has cared for man, both as a race and as an individual. "What is man," says the psalmist, "that thou art mindful of him, and the son of man that thou visitest him?" The answer is that he is very high in the scale of being—indeed but little lower than the angels of God. The standard proof of immortality presented by Christ was that God is the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob—a God who had revealed Himself to them, who had visited them, and communed with them, and made a covenant with them. The inference is that such attention on the part of the Creator implies immortal existence in the beings thus communicated with and cared for. Such pains would not be taken with short-lived creatures of a day: it

can only be justified on the ground that man possesses the powers of an endless life.

The doctrine of immortality enters our problem with irresistible force and solvent power. The earthly condition in which man is placed is but a shell of loose accretions. This may be broken and ground to powder without disturbing the germinal power of endless life which is resident within. Indeed, the crushing of the shell may chiefly serve the important purpose of releasing the inward life, and of permitting it to spread its aroma over all surrounding space. Unless the alabaster box of ointment had been broken, the incense of pure devotion which it represented could never have shed its sweet perfume around to delight not only those present in the room with Jesus, but all succeeding generations.

The most important lesson of human life is to learn that the interests of the soul are largely independent of its environment. Those are not always most likely to win the race who set out with greatest speed, but these are often overtaken by those whose strength had been reserved for the later portions of the trial. The seed which was sown upon stony ground looked even more promising at the start than that which bore an hundredfold. The human soul is a seed whose germination proceeds but a little distance during its earthly sphere of development. Its

fruitage is in the world to come: its harvests are gathered in heaven. Many an unpropitious beginning may have a most auspicious ending. It is not the distance which we have sailed upon the sea which determines our progress, but the direction in which we have sailed. The human soul is so vast in its capacities, and so elastic in its nature, that no outside powers can prevent its development or crush its energies. The power of thought, even tho it resides in a reed which can be easily broken, is superior to all that crushes it, for it knows that it is crusht, and knows that it can rise again, and triumph over the blind forces which have conspired against it.

Much sympathy is wasted upon those whose conditions of life seem unfavorable; for we do not properly appreciate the power of the human mind to adjust itself to seemingly unfavorable conditions, and to bring victory out of seeming defeat. As a matter of fact, what we in our ignorance call the best conditions of life do not ordinarily produce the best developments of character. The most favored classes in society do not perpetuate themselves, but are maintained by constant accessions from those who have passed through the school of poverty and adversity. The children of the rich and of the classes which seem most highly favored fall into numerous temptations which are not common to the lot of ordi-

nary humanity. The effect upon character of an excess of privileges seems to be more injurious than that of a seeming deficiency. This is equally true in privileges and intellectual culture. The education which is forced upon us does not serve its purposes. The most promising students are those who so prize their education that they struggle hard to obtain it. Knowledge received without effort does not become incorporated into the system as a living power. The only way in which a student having exceptional advantages can attain the proper ends of an education is by setting before himself a correspondingly high ideal for which he strives, but to which he cannot attain.

The human soul may be compared to a germ comprehending in itself all the mysterious powers of life that are manifested in the world. There is a capacity of life adapted to every conceivable condition. In the vegetable world not only does it produce exquisite forms of beauty in the rich soil and under the glowing sun of the tropics, but, in the farthest arctic lands which human feet have trod, flowers of surpassing delicacy and beauty find sustenance in every sheltered nook, and spring up on the very margin of the continental ice-sheet to transform into beauty the rays of the midnight sun. Beauty and usefulness are combined not only in the cedars of Lebanon which root themselves in the wasting débris

of the mountain glacier but in the hyssop that clings to the wall, and in the fungus which grows in the night, or flourishes in gloomy caverns to which the rays of the sun never penetrate. The germ of vegetable life is so elastic that it finds nourishing conditions and scope for development not only in the rich alluvial soil of the river valley, but it spreads itself in moss and lichens over every barren mountain peak and along every inaccessible rocky shore. It commands our admiration not only in the gigantic redwoods of California, but in the yeast with which the housewife leavens her bread and in the thousand other forms of microscopical plants which are the admiration of the man of science.

Animal life, too, is equally protean in its capacities. There are species of animals adapted to every conceivable condition where organic existence is possible. The geologic ages have nourished the immense reptiles and mammals whose skeletons adorn our museums, and attract equally the wondering gaze of the casual visitor and the attention of the student of comparative anatomy and physiology; while at the other end of the scale there are the countless myriads of animalcules which can be studied only with the highest powers of the microscope. The beauty of animal life appears, also, in the most diverse conditions. The bird of paradise and the iridescent plumage of the humming bird are rivaled by the

colors of the seashells and pearls produced by animal life in the depths of the ocean.

> "Full many a gem of purest ray serene
> The dark, unfathomed caves of ocean bear."

These capacities of animal and vegetable life but faintly reflect the more marvelous power which the human spirit has of transforming the most unpromising conditions of life into qualities of mind and character fit to be admired in heaven and adapted to secure both present and eternal blessedness. The form of beauty which the character shall assume is indeed determined by the conditions of life in which it is placed, but the fact of beauty is determined by the attitude of the mind itself. Man is not limited, as we too often think, to success in any single line of effort, but he can achieve success wherever he is placed. So great is the capacity of the human soul that all things may contribute to its welfare. It is truth as well as poetry that

> "This our life, exempt from public haunt,
> Finds tongues in trees, books in the running brooks,
> Sermons in stones, and good in everything."

Such is the treasure which is committed to our keeping. Such is the fortune brought within our reach. Upon such a basis are the unrestricted promises of God made to us. All things may work together for our good. God clothes the grass of the field. God beau-

tifies the lily. He makes of the ant a teacher for men. He guides the fish in paths of the seas. And he has made the soul of man with ten thousand capacities for the assimilation of the circumstances of life to which he is submitted. God is infinite in power, and in wisdom, and has adapted every man to some place in the economy of the universe, where he can work out for himself a career of endless glory and bliss. Let us not doubt the power and the wisdom of the Creator to take better care of us than He does of the sparrows of which two are sold for a farthing.

The power of the Creator to make all things work together for our good, however, is not absolute, but conditional. It is dependent upon the attitude of our will. The greatest gift which He has bestowed upon man is the gift of freedom. He has bestowed upon him the power of choice. He has made him in a true sense the architect of his own fortune. With this high privilege of attaining to a seat upon the thrones of heaven around which angels circle, there comes the great responsibility of accepting our providential mission in the world, and the great hazard of failing to seek for the best gifts which God in His wisdom has bestowed upon us. Even an infinite Creator cannot bestow the same outward lot upon all. He cannot give to us all the things which we may wish. He can only give us the things which are best adapted to

our capacities which, if we receive with thankfulness, will prove better than we ask or think.

From this development of thought there follow various urgent appeals of duty: The first is an appeal to the duty of submission to God. The universe is so vast, the future before us so endless, that man may well stand appalled at the prospect of directing his own ways. But he is not called upon to work out his own salvation alone. God has adjusted the forces so that the problem will work itself out if the soul but surrenders itself day by day to do with his might what his hands find to do. Man has no right to have anxious care for the future. In attempting to do good, he must, first of all, wait upon the Lord. He must cast his bread upon the waters in faith that it will return to him, tho after many days. It is evidently not the design of Providence that the tenor of our earthly life should move forward in a smooth and even current. The soul, as well as the body, is to be developed by discipline. How foolish to surrender ourselves willingly to a teacher of gymnastics, and then to murmur at the course of training to which God subjects us for the infinitely higher victories to which we are to aspire in the spiritual world. No: it must needs be that offenses come. Temptations, trials, disappointments, afflictions, are the common lot of men. In one form or other they are sure to follow us from the cradle to

the grave. They are the emery wheels upon which the diamonds are polished. They are the storms by which the oak is strengthened. They are the dumb-bells by which the muscles of the gymnast are developed. They are the chastisements of an all-wise heavenly Father which He bestows upon the children whom He dearly loves. The first great lesson of life is one of personal surrender. We must learn to rest in the arms of the Lord as a weaned child in the arms of his mother.

God has great designs for us all, but their culmination is in the distant future. We see enough of the glory of this fruition to rejoice ever in the midst of our present infirmities, but with the eye of faith we can press triumphantly forward, as seeing both Him and that which is invisible.

How different in the retrospect does life look from what it did at the outset. As the plan of God has unfolded, everything has been different from what we expected. We set out in ignorance of our powers, in ignorance of the capacities and wants of our fellowmen, in ignorance of the changing circumstances of human life. But if we are faithful to our daily trust God has better things in store for us than we ask or think. If we have insisted on having our own way, we but invite a contest with the Almighty. Great waves of sorrow and disappointment are sure to roll over us. The storms of adversity are sure to

break upon us with irresistible force. To these inevitable trials to which the Lord has appointed us we must learn to bow; else they will break us, and dash our hopes to pieces.

These words address us all; and our thoughts if they be directed to the past, or even to the present, must convict us of cruel unbelief, and of great sin in the way we have thwarted the Almighty in His attempts to care for our highest interests. Repeatedly when the blasts of adversity have come, instead of bowing like the willow, and suffering the storms to pass, saying, It is the Lord, and He doeth all things well, we have endeavored to brave the storm, and to resist the will of God in the purposes which He had to accomplish. We have murmured, and, like the children of Israel in the wilderness, have longed for the fleshpots of Egypt, even with its slavery, and chosen its bondage rather than Him, and the trials of the desert intervening between us and the possession of the promised land. Our hearts have been full of jealousy, because God has given to others what seemed greater advantages than He has bestowed upon us. He has given to them greater wealth, or more perfect symmetry of form, or more beauty of face, or more brilliancy of mind, or more strength of body, and we have murmured and repined and complained and mourned over our lot. All this springs from a root of unbelief. We have not faith to trust

God. We judge Him by too low a standard, counting it impossible that He could fulfil His promises. We insist on walking by sight, and not by faith. In all this we dishonor God, and wrong our own souls. Our first duty is to humble ourselves absolutely beneath the mighty hand of God, to acknowledge His power (for what is man that he should resist His will?) to trust His wisdom (for what is man that he should criticize the wisdom of Him whose days are past our finding out?). It is ours rather at all times to praise His goodness, for behind every frowning providence He hides a smiling face.

A third lesson urged upon us by the text is that everyone is bound to magnify his own calling, and to cultivate with diligence the field which is assigned to him. God is an all-wise provider; He sees the end from the beginning; His eye scans every portion of the field, and He has assigned to every man his work. It is not for us to neglect our portion of the field, because it seems less important than that which is assigned to another. The great events of the world have been accomplished by unexpected means. No human foresight could have discerned the savior of his country in the log cabin in which Abraham Lincoln spent his childhood days. Men did not perceive the greatest general of modern times in the hard-working tanner of Galena. But not all lives great in their results come

thus conspicuously before the gaze of men. Ten thousand thousand lives as important as theirs are known only to Him who seeth in secret, but who will at last reward us openly. It may be the unfaithfulness of a single picket that allows the enemy to come in like a flood to overrun the country. It may be the drowsiness of some lonely lighthouse-keeper that suffers the ship to drift upon the rocks to the destruction of all on board. It is a single act of thoughtlessness on the part of the switchtender which causes the destruction of many a railroad train. It is the carelessness of a workman in the use of poor material that causes the weakness of a bridge which fails at the critical moment, and plunges to destruction those who trusted themselves to it. In times of religious interest, a thoughtless word or an inconsiderate action or even a failure on our part to recognize the day of the Lord's visitation may turn the scale with some souls with whom the great decision is trembling in the balance. In nothing do we make a greater mistake, and in no way do we more thoroughly discredit the wisdom of God, and dishonor His love, than by neglecting what may seem to us the small opportunities and the insignificant mercies of life. Before God there is nothing great, and there is nothing small. The spark is an insignificant thing, but behold how great the conflagration which it kindles. The tongue is an insignificant member, but it is

set on fire of hell, and a word rashly spoken cannot be recalled.

If God thus cares for us in things both great and small, what shall be said of us if we care for none of these things, if we live as if there were no God and no eternal hope in the world? What shall be the condemnation of those who utterly ignore their higher and religious nature, and live as if they had no responsibility either to God or man? What is our purpose in life? What are we doing with the talents which God has given us? How are we improving the time which is allotted to us for life's work? On His part God has thought of all the details of our life. He has numbered the hairs of our heads; he has given us a charge to keep, and a throne on which to reign. What are we doing in return? Behold, what privileges He has bestowed upon us in this Christian era, this Christian land, this Christian community, these Christian homes. How sore will be our judgment if we neglect so great opportunities, and continue to live as if there were no Savior above, and no heavenly kingdom for us to seek in the world.

ZENOS

THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

ANDREW C. ZENOS

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THE NEW HEAVENS AND THE NEW EARTH

PROF. ANDREW C. ZENOS, D.D.

"We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness."—2 Pet. 3 : 13.

THESE words are a reminder rather than a piece of information. The belief in the destruction and reconstruction of the material universe was a general one among the early Christians. In the book of Revelation, this belief even seems to control the whole thought. A new heaven and a new earth stand before the seer as the goal of the whole movement of things. "For the first heaven and the first earth are passed away; and the sea is no more." "And he that sitteth on the throne said, Behold I make all things new." But the idea was not peculiarly Christian; it was a commonplace of prophetic preaching. As far back as the Exile period, the prophet heard Jehovah say, "Behold I create new heavens and a new earth, and the former things shall not be remembered nor come to mind." And in the two centuries, more or less, preceding the Christian era, the thought had been cherished and encouraged. There was much in the social and political

world of the time to suggest corruption and decay and inevitable collapse. The world seemed to have reached its old age. Signs of decrepitude were visible. Wars and commotions were causing the destruction of cities hoary with antiquity, and an air of uncertainty prevailed. Old oracles were called to mind of "wonders in the heaven and on the earth: blood, and fire and pillar of smoke," "the sun turned into darkness and the moon into blood." Isaiah had said, "All the host of heaven shall be dissolved and the heavens shall be rolled together as a scroll, and all the host shall fade away." A class of prophetic writers, using the literary form of apocalypse, drew vivid pictures of the transformation which would bring about a new and fresh universe out of the ruins of the old.

At first glance the fact that the expectation of such a universal renovation of the world was not original with apostles and evangelists may appear to detract from its truth or value. But in view of the great amount borrowed by the earliest Christian teachers from their Jewish, and even from their heathen predecessors, we cannot think that it loses its value, when traced to a stage antecedent to the apostolic. Nevertheless there is a difference between the earlier expectation of "new heavens and a new earth" and the apostolic. For whereas to the former the predominant element is the outward and spectacular feature, to the latter

the inner and moral reality rules. To the apocalyptists the method of transformation by a sudden, dazzling, overwhelming cataclysmic overthrow and magic creative reconstruction was in the foreground. To the Christian the main and essential fact was the regeneration of the moral content of the universe; and altho bold and picturesque ways of thinking of it were not discarded, these were means, not ends; they were vehicles to carry the thought of the moral restoration of the universe through Jesus Christ.

First of all, there was need for such renovation. And to feel this need was the first sign of a healthy moral nature. It was impossible to be satisfied with the world as it was. Does this mean that Peter and John regarded God's work a failure? Could they have been ignorant of the account in Genesis with its record that "God saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was good?" We can hardly think so. These men were too thorough Israelites to ignore God's part in the creation. It was rather because they knew too well what God had meant the world to be that they found in it a source of displeasure. God had created the heavens and the earth to be the home of a race which should know Him and honor Him. But instead of this, as the faithful saw it, the world was polluted by sin. Even the people of God's own choice had failed to redeem it from the power of evil. For generations the

faithful had struggled and they had been worsted in the fight. Evil was not a mere influence diffused through society without a definite location. It was not hiding in the dark places and doing its work under cover. It was impersonated in the rulers of the world. Men like Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, Nero, were openly defying God and disobeying His laws. Men like Herod and Caiaphas were controlling the destinies of the chosen people. And in their use of the forces of nature, they had seized upon all things and made them subject to their wicked wills. "The creation was subjected to vanity not of its own will." And it was groaning and travailing with pain in the hope of being delivered from the load of corruption.

Let us note that the spirit of discontent with the world for yielding to sin is a sign of health. All the prophets began by opening their eyes to the evil about them. There is a gospel abroad to the effect that men ought to be happy no matter what the circumstances about them. It is not a new gospel. Jeremiah and Ezekiel heard it and denounced it. Such a gospel promises no good. He who preaches it lacks the very first qualification for a true prophetic mission. It was because Moses saw evil in Egypt that he was used by God to lead the children of Israel from the land of bondage into that of promise. It was because the prophets saw the evil of the people that they

were sent with their burning messages to turn them to righteousness. It was because John the Baptist saw hypocrisy and wickedness that he was empowered to proclaim the coming Messiah. It was because Luther and Wesley saw spiritual deadness in the Church that they were given the vision of a new life in the body of Christ and helped to quicken it. Every great onward movement in the direction of bringing in " new heavens and a new earth " has sprung out of a feeling of discontent with the evil of the world. The eye which is blind to the evil is likely to be blind to the good also.

But while every prophet must begin with sensitiveness towards what ought not to be in the world; while he must realize the sting of sin, while he must appreciate its terrible power and destructive effect, he must not lapse into pessimism. No pessimist can become a true prophet. Far beyond the mere need of renovation, the prophet must see the possibility of it. The heavens and the earth as they are must pass away, because better heavens and a better earth are ready to take their place. If we shall fight sin and evil in the world as we ought, we must be dominated by the love of the better things awaiting us, which by their beauty and loveliness make the evil to appear all the more hateful. The prophet, like Hamlet, must hold before his own eye, and those of others, two pictures,

ever calling "Look on this picture, and on this!" Thus only can he turn men from the old and decrepit, from the corrupt and decaying, to the fresh and powerful, to the beautiful and vital.

But the expectation of new heavens and a new earth is more than the offspring of discontent with present evil. It is rooted in an experience of change which one feels must culminate in a total transformation. The new heavens and the new earth are being even now created. There are scoffers as in Peter's day who say, "From the day that the fathers fell asleep all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation." But they are exceedingly superficial observers and shallow thinkers. All things do not continue as they were. To be sure no change comes over nature such as seems to be pictured in the imaginative conception of these men of old. Looked at outwardly, the same heavens and the same earth are now about us which were about them. The same stars shine overhead; the same mountains bound the horizon at the same centers of observation; the same great rivers run their eternal courses into the same oceans. But we would be making a grievous mistake if we believed that the heavens and the earth to-day are after all the same as those of the days of Peter and John; for does not sameness depend on the inner view and the impression made on the seeing eye and the

hearing ear rather than on identity of outward form or even substance? The youth leaves his home in the village, and after a score of years of wandering in the world, and perhaps of life in the great city, returns to the village. He looks on the same streets, the same houses, the same park, the same church; but are they the same for him? How they have shrunk and lost their glory! He may love them still, yea, and more than ever, but they no longer possess the same magnitude and significance in the world.

Something like this change has come over the world, and is ever coming. Were Peter and John to have seen as in a vision the world as it actually is to-day instead of dreaming their apocalyptic dreams, they could not have said more truly than they do, "I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heavens and the first earth are passed away." The cities in which they lived, how different! The sounds that now would greet their ears, how unintelligible! The forms of life that would strike their eyes, how amazing! And even the stars in the firmament, tho apparently the same, and the landscape about so familiar, what a different story of power and glory they would tell.

The earth and the heavens are for us what we know them to be, and as revealed by telescope, microscope and spectroscope and modern science with its wonderful and intricate

apparatus for observation, they are certainly other than they were in the days of the apostles. Instead of a vault in the shape of a huge inverted bowl resting on a flat surface, made irregular by mountains and lakes, the modern eye sees an infinite stretch of space, within which revolve countless myriads of burning spheres. Instead of a simple universe, consisting of four elements, earth, water, air and fire, the modern eye sees a vast multitude and variety of atoms and of still more primal electrons and ions. Surely to the eye of the present day student "old things have passed away, behold all things are new."

But more striking if possible is the change in the world of mankind. The same primal passions, the same inward hungerings and thirsts, the same quest for knowledge and power and happiness still burn and move in a restless turmoil, but the expressions of them, how different! The alignment of classes and masses, of races and tribes, of masters and slaves, of rich and poor, how utterly transformed!

But it may be said, Is this a legitimate interpretation of the apostolic thought? If we limit regard to mere external and imaginative garb of it, it may not be; but if we penetrate into the real motive and intent of it, it surely is. For the longing that led to such an ideal was much more than a hunger for change of material form. It looked forward to a more

harmonious universe, to one that would display God's glory more fully and serve as a suitable residence for God's immortal children. The world as it was, was too completely identified with the sin of man to serve any longer the purposes of its creation. Every portion of it, every element in it, was too full of evil associations, too heavily burdened with thoughts of lust and greed, selfishness and malice. It needed a complete purification; a perfect dissolution of its old associations, and when this was achieved it would in a true sense be destroyed and reconstructed.

Nevertheless the question of importance still remains, whether these new heavens and this new earth are better; whether the apostles would recognize in them the world of which they dreamed and for which they yearned. Men of Oriental civilizations coming into the midst of Western life may be made to give us the answer. Are they impressed with the superiority of the Western? Not always. Indeed the stronger the contrast with what they have been accustomed to the less their inclination to look upon the change with favor. Were Peter and John to pronounce upon our new world, it is certain they would not allow the facts of a more complex life, of larger knowledge and control of nature, keener pleasures and finer sensibilities, to influence their judgments. They would look beneath the surface into the strife of human

passions, the degradation and misery caused by sin, the arrogance, the lust and greed, consuming, devouring and destroying all within their reach, and to the extent to which these ruled in the world, they would still long for and predict " new heavens and a new earth."

The earth which loomed into the vision of these ancient seers was one in which " dwelleth righteousness." The only world that will satisfy the child of God is that in which his Father's will is known and done. And what is righteousness? First of all it is a quality that pervades social relations, resulting in each person's giving to every other all that is right. Righteousness in the world means that men and women do not take advantage of one another, are honest in all transactions, pure and holy in character and in conduct. But all this is negative, and righteousness is something more than abstinence from evil.

The world has passed through two stages of moral life. In the first, the nearest to the brute, each one had regard to himself first of all, and tried to build himself at the expense of all others. How can I get the most and give the least? was his main question and concern. Alas, that so many still live in this stage. In the second stage, each regards every other and strives to be true and just to the interests of all. The question then is, How can I both give and take exact equivalents? How can I avoid being cheated, yet not cheat

any other? How can I so adjust my relations as neither to get more than I give nor give more than I get? But there is a third stage to be reached. It is that in which the life and law of Jesus Christ will be the aim and achievement of all. According to this law each will strive to do for others as much as he can. The question will then be, How can I give the most in exchange for the least, for did not Jesus say, "It is more blesséd to give than to receive?" Men will not cease to strive to build themselves up either in riches or in wisdom or power, but it will be in order that they may spend themselves for the advantage of their brethren. Does this seem impracticable? John Wesley kept from his income just enough to meet the daily expenses of his household, and gave the remainder for the advancement of the kingdom of God.

But the righteousness which will fill and pervade the new heavens and the new earth is even more than a perfect conformity to standards and conceptions of right living for the sake of mere right living. It includes the recognition of God's holy character and holy will. It is the righteousness which the prophets preached to Israel of old, the righteousness which Jesus Christ lived and exemplified. The writer of the text was an ardent Christian, and the golden age he anticipates is the golden age of the Christian mind and consciousness, the age of the reign of God through

Jesus Christ. To the Christian, righteousness cannot be a mere abstraction alluring him by its own fascination, nor even a supreme law to be mechanically recognized and blindly obeyed. It can only be a living force drawn from an eternal personality and controlling all personal relations.

Hence to the Christian of the apostolic age the second coming of Christ in person to establish a reign of righteousness and peace upon earth was more than a glowing hope; it was a burning passion. And to the Christian of all ages the unconquerable faith that in some form or other the personal relation to Christ will lead in the molding of the character of His followers and result in the overwhelming predominance of the Christ-man, the man for whom the righteousness of God is at the same time an ideal, a goal and a law, must be ever indispensable.

But if so, the new heavens and the new earth for which the Christian looks cannot be expected in a merely passive way. We must do more than wait and prepare ourselves for them. We must in a large measure work out the transformation for which we are longing. It is at this point that the Christian's look forward into the golden age differs from the dreamer's Utopia. It is more than a creature of the imagination to be delighted in for its iridescent beauty. It is a land of promise, drawing through its charms; but it is also a

building in process of erection, to which each day one may add what will bring it nearer completion.

Do we wish for the new heavens and the new earth? Are we looking and longing for them? If so, we may not be indifferent to the share we must have in their making. For while it is true that like the first heavens and the first earth they are to be the creation and gift of God to His own, it is also true that God is creating them even now through His own. God is not merely "the Power not ourselves making for righteousness"; He is also the Power in ourselves making for righteousness. And righteousness is not only to dwell in the renovated universe, but to be the force that shall reconstruct it.

ZWEMER

BIBLE TEACHING ABOUT CONSCIENCE

X—13

SAMUEL MARINUS ZWEMER

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BIBLE TEACHING ABOUT CONSCIENCE

S. M. Zwemer, D.D.

"And herein do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offence toward God, and toward men."—Acts 24 : 16.

The Bible stands unique among all the other so-called sacred books of the East in that it reveals the fact of the conscience and addresses itself to the conscience. The Koran has not even a word to express the idea, and the idea itself is strangely absent from Moslem thought. Doctor Duff, if we are not mistaken, was the first to make the statement that the primary work of a missionary is to create a conscience; and this has been repeated often since by other thinkers and observers in India and the East. How rare is the blush of childhood, that first indication of a live conscience, seen in heathen lands; how weak is the moral sense among many in Christian lands!

A revival of conscience and of right views regarding its authority is one of the crying needs of the world to-day. A revival of conscience would be a revival of piety in the Church and would lead to deeper knowledge

of sin and, consequently, higher ideas and ideals of holiness.

The apostle Paul in his defense before Felix gives us the keynote of Bible teaching regarding the Christian conscience and those words may well introduce our study of the subject. "Herein," he says, "do I exercise myself, to have always a conscience void of offense toward God, and toward men." Paul was always a conscientious man but Paul did not always have the same conscience. He was conscientious as a Pharisee and lived up to his moral light. He makes much of conscience in his preaching as an apostle; and, long after his conversion, he says that he exerts himself, trains himself, exercises himself (the word is very strong in the Greek), "to have a conscience void of offense."

Man by creation was possest of threefold powers of soul, generally called the intellect, the affections, and the will. He was also created in holiness and righteousness. That is, his moral sense was enlightened so as to know God and know right perfectly. All his moral affections were inclined to the good and the pure. And his will was to obey God and His law. Adam's conscience in Paradise was void of offense, pure, good, and holy, as were all the other powers of his soul.

Even as from the ruins of Pompeii the historian can reconstruct an exact picture of the pomp and pride of Roman society, so from

the universal testimony of fallen man in all ages it is possible to a degree to learn what a glorious gift conscience was before the fall—before the earthquake of sin overwhelmed its authority and integrity. The supreme place assigned to conscience by even heathen philosophers and sensual poets is remarkable. Byron calls it "the very oracle of God." Cicero described it as "God ruling in the human soul." And all the philosophers of modern times, tho they may reject the authority of a divine revelation, can not away with that which their great leader, Kant, calls "the categorical imperative" and "the eternal ought." The very terms used for conscience in Latin, Greek and other languages indicate something (*con science;* co-knowledge; the Greek, *suneidesis* has similar significance. The same idea occurs in the Teutonic languages, *e. g.*, the Dutch, *gewelen*) of what unfallen man once knew with God. The ruined remnants of this knowledge of the right still bear witness to the grandeur of the human conscience before the fall. Paul refers to it when he writes: "For when the Gentiles which have not the law do by nature the things contained in the law, these having not the law are a law unto themselves; which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another."

Not only was conscience intended to be a co-witness of God and an unerring guide to truth and right, but also to be a strong bulwark against temptations. The power of moral restraint which it still exercises must have been infinitely stronger and more authoritative at the first. The joy of an approving conscience must have been a powerful incentive to righteousness even in Paradise.

Man's conscience at creation was like a perfectly adjusted and compensated standard compass by which to direct his voyage of life. Or, to change the figure, his conscience resembled a delicate and costly barometer hanging in the chamber of his soul ready to warn him of the storms of the tempter. And yet that warning was unheeded; the voice of conscience was drowned in the tumult of appetite and desire; Adam fell. All his posterity shared in the awful heritage of moral ruin and moral corruption.

What effect had Adam's fall upon his conscience and that of his posterity? When a costly mercurial barometer falls from its support, be it ever so short a distance, no scientist longer trusts its indications of atmospheric pressure. It is still a barometer and still responds in a measure to the weight of an approaching storm; but for accurate and scientific use that barometer is ruined. It is a fallen barometer and cannot under all circumstances be relied upon. It is no longer stand-

ard. Even so with conscience. The fall of Adam was the fall of his whole soul with all its powers. Conscience of shame and guilt was awakened by the voice of God. "Who told thee that thou wast naked?" and "Where art thou?" These two questions of the Almighty showed Adam whence he had fallen. In the New Testament the fallen conscience or the conscience of the natural man is described by four adjectives which indicate at once the character and the degrees of ruin that came to conscience whether in individuals or in the mass of humanity.

In the eighth chapter of First Corinthians Paul speaks of a weak conscience. He tells of men among the Corinthians whose consciences were no longer strong and stedfast but weak and wavering; men whose consciences stumbled at things which in themselves were not wrong, and yet for whose sake those harmless things were to be avoided by stronger Christians. Now a weak conscience is not a healthy conscience. It is a troublesome guest and a more troublesome neighbor. Men and women with weak consciences should not attempt to set the standard for others. They are not only to be pitied but are blameworthy. Such a conscience may not perhaps call evil, good; but it comes under condemnation for calling good, evil. The Pharisees were so conscientious about the letter of the law that they trampled upon its spirit. They were afraid

to break the ceremonial Sabbath laws but did not hesitate with perjured witnesses to condemn the Prince of Life before Pilate's judgment seat. What crimes have been committed in the name of religion by the power of "a weak conscience!" All the weight and the curse of ceremonialism and sacerdotalism may be traced back to weak consciences which did not distinguish between the shell and the core of religion and confounded the shadow with the substance. A weak conscience often "vaunteth itself, is easily provoked," and thinketh evil continually. It is scrupulous where it should be discriminating, and upright when it should be pliable. Paul did not have a weak conscience, and when Peter showed signs of one he withstood him to the face because he was to be blamed.

A stronger word for the fallen conscience is that used in the Epistle to the Hebrews. In the tenth chapter and twenty-second verse the conscience of the natural man is called evil. "Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience." It is the same Greek word elsewhere used to describe fallen angels as evil spirits. In the case of conscience too the perversion of the best is the worst. When the compass has become evil there is little hope for the ship in a storm. The evil conscience no longer is guided by the infallible law of God but by the evil inclinations of its own imagination and desires. The scales of jus-

tice no longer hang even but moral judgment is perverted and the crooked is called straight.

The familiar picture of Gulliver, flat on his back and unable to rise, because of the hundreds of tiny cords with which the Lilliputians have bound him, contains an allegory. Gulliver is conscience and the tiny strands are evil habits, inherited or acquired, that prevent conscience from exerting its authority. The giant has been overcome by the dwarfs. An evil conscience, alas, is the inheritance of every son of Adam.

In Titus 1 : 15 we read of a third stage in the downward path of conscience. " Unto the pure all things are pure but unto them that are defiled and unbelieving is nothing pure but even their mind and conscience is defiled. They profess that they know God but in works they deny Him being abominable and disobedient and unto every good work reprobate." " Evil " refers to the general character and tendency of our conscience; " defiled " to some particular spot and blemish in our moral nature which, like an indelible stain on costly fabric, ruins the whole garment. How many there are whose consciences are defiled in some particular; men whose moral integrity is respected and their judgment upright in all points of the law, save one; and that one point proves how deep is the stain of a defiled conscience. Right here environment acts upon each one of us,

while education or habit emphasizes its influence for good or ill. How hard it is for one to keep a pure and a sensitive conscience regarding the holy Sabbath day in an environment where everything relating to that day is lax and worldly. The insinuating power of the presence of moral leprosy on a pure conscience is described by Pope in these lines:

> "Vice is a monster of such frightful mien,
> That to be hated needs but to be seen;
> But, seen too oft, familiar with her face,
> We first endure, then pity, then embrace."

Happy is the young man who has not experienced this awful truth in his own life. A morbid desire to know the taste of forbidden fruit is sure to lead on to a defiled conscience and a defiled life.

The last New Testament adjective used to describe the conscience of the unregenerate is the terrible word used by the apostle in 1 Tim. 4: 1, 2. "Now the Spirit speaketh expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy, having their conscience seared with a hot iron." A cauterized conscience; that is the word in the original. First weak, then evil, then defiled and finally dead, past feeling, seared with a hot iron, cauterized; such is the awful end of a conscience in a heart of unbelief and an environment of sin

and hypocrisy. The compass is not only inaccurate and unreliable in this case, but it has ceased to be a compass. The magnetic needle that once responded to the pole and oscillated at the slightest touch is now rusted fast to the pivot. The whole sense is gone. A man without a conscience is a man without a character. He can no longer be pricked in his conscience; it is cauterized. Such there are even in the bounds of the Christian Church and we call them gospel-hardened. Not hardened by the gospel but hardened against the gospel, because their consciences have ceased to respond to its appeals. Such there are among the Gentiles "having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; who being past feeling have given themselves over unto lasciviousness to work all uncleanness with greediness." What missionary, what physician of souls, has not met with cases of cauterized consciences?

So far we have considered the effect of the fall on the individual conscience. Every natural conscience is imperfect and no two consciences are exactly alike. Each partakes of environment and heredity and education. A national conscience can only exist where the individual conscience is active and has authority; and its character depends on the conscience of individuals for its elements good or

bad. By remembering this we understand how for example Spain and Scotland differ in their view of bull fights and how public morals are better in the twentieth than in the tenth century? The reason for this great contrast and change can only be the fact that conscience, however much fallen, can be regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. There is no regeneration of the soul without a regeneration of the conscience.

This brings us to our third question. What should conscience be in a Christian? Paul's own life is the best illustration of the vast change regeneration makes in the conscience. The deeds of violence in persecuting the Church, which he once did conscientiously, he now abhors. His conscience is no longer weak, clinging to the beggarly elements of Judaism, but strong and manly.

A regenerate conscience is described in the New Testament by the words "good" (1 Tim. 1 : 5, 19), "pure" (1 Tim. 3 : 9), and "purged" (Heb. 9 : 14; 10 : 22). Although in the Old Testament the word "conscience" does not appear in the English version there is little doubt that the word translated "reins" would better be rendered "conscience." For example Ps. 73 : 21, "Thus my heart was grieved and I was pricked in my (reins) conscience." The same word translated "reins," in reference to the seat of the affections or the moral nature of man, is ren-

dered " kidneys " in the account of the ceremonial offerings of the Pentateuch. A careful comparison of these passages leads me to conclude that because the kidneys were considered the seat of the moral sense in man, that part of the sacrificial victim was always put on the altar as pure (Exod. 29 : 13, 22; Lev. 3 : 4, 10, 15; 9 : 10, 19, etc.).

According to New Testament teaching the only power and instrument adequate to cleanse the conscience and renew it is the blood of Christ. " Having your hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience " (Heb. 10 : 11). " How much more shall the blood of Christ purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God " (Heb. 9 : 14).

The idea is often held that man's conscience both before and after conversion is identical; and that to be conscientious is to be possest of true piety. But both Scripture and experience teach the contrary. When the miracle of the new birth takes place conscience is aroused, enlightened, and once more given the throne of authority in the heart. How important is it then to have a good conscience, " a conscience void of offense toward God and man! " To this end Paul exercised himself daily. He put his conscience in training in the school of Christ. Notice the importance attached to conscience in Scripture.

In Heb. 13 : 18 a good conscience is made the subjective condition for intercessory

prayer. "Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience; in all things willing to live honestly." You must be willing to live and act yourself, as you ask men to pray that you may live and act. Sincerity is the fruit of a good conscience.

Baptism, according to the apostle, is not only the sign and seal of regeneration in a general sense, but of a renewed conscience. "The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh but the answer of a good conscience toward God) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). A renewed life according to all the commandments of God is impossible unless we have a renewed conscience to respond gladly to all demands of holiness and an enlightened conscience to teach us the principles that underlie the moral law.

A good conscience is considered so important a gift and grace that it is repeatedly linked with love and faith. "Now the end of the commandment is charity out of a pure heart and of a good conscience and of faith unfeigned." Yet where we hear a hundred prayers for increase in love, and more strength of faith, we scarcely ever hear one offered for a better conscience; such a conscience as is the exact opposite of that weak, evil, defiled, and deadened thing which only the power of Christ can restore and purify.

The prayerful education of one's conscience by exercise and by the study of Christ's character, is the only road to piety.

Most striking of all, it is the teaching of Paul that without a good conscience, faith is vain and the Christian may suffer shipwreck when in sight of the harbor if he throws overboard this goodly compass. "War the good warfare: holding faith and a good conscience, which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19 R. V.). A hypocrite sails not only under false colors but he sails on life's sea and into eternity without compass. "Why call ye me Lord, and do not the things which I say?" Why are ye so much religious and so little conscientious?

There is no power on earth equal to a sincere Christian character, a man who, like Paul, daily trains himself "to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men." Too often the world applies to the Church with truth the words of Emerson: "What you are is talking so loud that I cannot hear what you say." The Church needs a revival of conscience and that revival will come if we study the teaching of God's word on the subject.

From this teaching three things are very evident:

An unregenerate conscience is an unsafe guide. To live conscientiously is not to be

saved. The words " Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me " were addrest to a very conscientious man; but also to one whose conscience was blind and evil.

Even the regenerate conscience needs education. Like all the gifts and graces of the spirit it must grow more and more as we grow in knowledge. The standard of morals must become ever higher and purer as the years go by until we come " to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ " A firm grasp on this truth is the best antidote to an easy-going and unbiblical perfectionism. The command " Be ye perfect " means more and more according as our consciences become more tender, more holy, more like Christ. The growth in grace and in the knowledge of what God requires of us, are like the two sides of a parabolic curve, ever approaching but never meeting. Those who are living nearest to God see their own imperfections the more distinctly in the blinding light of His holy glory.

The kind of preaching that leads to conviction of sin, must be aimed at the conscience. Here it is, that even a bow drawn at a venture by a man in simplicity will send an arrow of conviction between the joints of the harness. Preaching to the intellect may be edifying but it never hits the bull's-eye nor makes sinners cry out, " What shall I do to be saved? " Preaching to the affections without reaching the conscience is like sowing on un-

plowed soil. But he who reaches a man's conscience has broken through to the very citadel and can demand an unconditional surrender. This was Paul's method. "Not handling the Word of God deceitfully but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ . . . knowing therefore the terror of the Lord we persuade men. But we are made manifest unto God and I trust also are made manifest in your consciences." This kind of preaching made even Felix tremble when his conscience was put face to face with righteousness and judgment. It was the method of all the Old Testament prophets. David in royal purple and awful guilt was not proof against that one arrow of Nathan aimed at the conscience: "Thou art the man." The Fifty-first Psalm and the One Hundred and Thirty-ninth Psalm give us David's idea of an awakened conscience when the searchlight of God's eye lays bare every secret of his heart.

Christ's words to that sensual, self-righteous group of Pharisees, surrounding the woman who was a sinner, were so well aimed at the only vulnerable point of their proud panoply of hypocrisy, that we read: "They when they heard it, being convicted by conscience went out one by one beginning at the eldest, even unto the last."

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